THE STORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

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To

G. B. G.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The text of this edition is substantially the same as of the previous one with some additions and alterations I have endeavoured to make this edition as error-proof as possible. My thanks are due to Mr. J. P. Desouza for the proofs and to Mr. Wakaukar of Dhar for preparing the Map.

B G. G.

Bombay, 12th June 1948.

PREFACE

THE object of the following pages is to present the outlines of political and cultural history of ancient India. They are primarily meant for such readers who desire to have an intimate and comprehensive knowledge of men and events in the ancient days of India. My aim, in writing this book was to make the story as interesting as possible but whether I have succeeded in doing so I leave it to the reader to decide.

In a book of this type controversies and footnotes are a usual feature, both of which will be conspicuous by their absence here. The history of ancient India is still in the stage of growth and development and as such is naturally full of controversies. These controversies and footnotes though of absorbing interest to the scholar—for whom, incidentally this book is not meant—are confusing to the layman and it is confusion I primarily aim at avoiding. I am all too conscious of the faults of the book for which no excuse is sought to be made. All the faults are mine and whatever merit there be is entirely due to those many scholars on whose works I have so fully drawn for the material of this book. Footnotes would have been an adequate means of acknowledging it but for reasons already mentioned they are not to be found in this book. So I take this opportunity of acknowledging my debt of gratitude to all those scholars—and they are many—whose works have made my effort feel almost a pleasure.

Finally, I must thank Rev. Fr. H. Heras, S.J., Director, Indian Historical Research Institute, St. Xavier's College, Bombay for encouraging and helping me in the present attempt. Likewise my sincere thanks are due to Prof. G. M. Moraes of St. Xavier's College for offering valuable suggestions.

B. G. G.

2nd June 1947.

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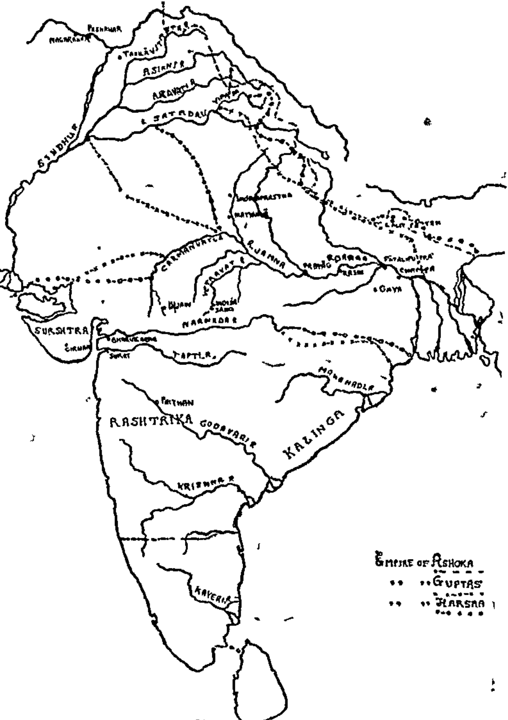
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THE STORY OF THE CAVEMAN

LONG long ago sometime somewhere the first members of this wonderful race of human beings appeared on the surface of this earth. A keen controversy is raging among scholars as to where exactly and when exactly man trod upon this globe of ours for the first time. The controversy is still open and new archaeological finds are constantly forcing us to change our notions regarding the earliest habitat of man. But certain it is that the forests of pre-historic India must have entertained colonies of men at a very early date. According to Sir Harry Johnston, India was most probably the land where the evolution of man took place. The most likely early habitation of man in India must have been the lower fringes of the ancient Dandakaranya. The inhospitable mountainous regions of the Himalayas could not have encouraged early settlements and the dense tropical jungles would prove equally unattractive. The broad Gangetic delta, as we know of it to day, could have been the most likely place had it been as it is now. But in the early days the beds of the rivers must have been much broader and higher than at present and the regions adjoining them too marshy to be inviting. Man, therefore, most probably rose and grew in the comparatively narrow strip of coast between the jungle and the Indian ocean.

The Palaeolithic Period: For the orderly narration of the story of man in pre-historic ages historians divide it into four groups. The first is called the Palaeolithic Age (old stone age) the second Neolithic Age (new stone age), the third Early Iron Age and the fourth the Later Iron Age. Numerous remains of palaeolithic tools and implements have been found in the South of

India which was very probably the chief region of palaeolithic man in India. The tools found there are made of quartizite and include axes, choppers and knives. Palaeolithic man was most probably a cave-dweller, acquainted with the use of fire but ignorant of the use of grinding and polishing his weapons. His habits were nomadic for no habitations of the palaeolithic period have been found. The wooden club must have been his principal weapon and he may have used bows and arrows, spears and hurling stones. The dress consisted mostly of strips of hides and skins worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm so as to leave it free for action. The family organisation may have been matriarchal. Their speech was of a holophrastic type, i.e., the whole sentence, unbroken into words, formed one unit of speech. The numerous dolmens in South India suggest that they may have served as granaries or places of burial in Prehistoric times. The rock paintings from Bellary, Edkal and Ghatsila suggest that the belief of palaeolithic Man was of an animistic and magical kind and the remains in the caves at Sorapur in the Dekhan indicate that he believed in and offered human sacrifice.

The Neolithic Age: It is generally believed that there must have been a long and difficult interval between Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages but in India there seems to have been no such hiatus and that the transition between the two ages must have been slow and gradual. The weapons of Neolithic Age are polished, hence the name. Neolithic man used a great variety of weapons and tools. The Neolithic Age saw great advance in civilization "not only in the improved arms and tools, but also in the discovery of the art of firing the vessels structed by skilful potters out of plastic clay."

Neolithic Man shows a further advance over his palaeolithic ancestor in the domestication of animals as indicated by the remains of bovine animals in neolithic sites. Most probably horse, sheep and dog were the first animals to be domesticated and their meat together with corn and milk must have been the main items of food in the Neolithic age.

The houses of Neolithic man must have been made of perishable material for no remains of such dwellings are found. The method of the disposal of the dead was cremation but evidence which has now become available points to burial as a more common method. Describing the burial sites in Pudukottai State, Prof. Ayyangar says, "A careful examination of the sites shows that dead men were buried in mud pits or placed in pots before burial."

"The dead man was placed in a sitting posture in an earthenware pot, the pot was then let into a pit and half filled with sand, and rice and other grains on a tray were placed before the dead man. His stone tools were also inserted at the sides of the pot. The foodstuffs and tools were no doubt intended for the use of the dead person in his post-mortem life for the neolithians believed in the life of the spirit after death. Then more sand was poured into the pot till it was full and the pot covered with an earthenware lid. The pit was then filled in and a stone slab placed on it."

The pottery of the Neolithic period with its leaf patterns, lively drawings and painted fillets bears evidence of their artistic colour perceptions. Red, yellow, brown, purplish, grey and orange appear to be the favourite colours.

The Iron Age: The Neolithic Age was succeeded by the Iron Age when civilization took a long stride towards protohistoric times. The discovery of iron must have soon been followed by discovery of gold, silver and copper. The age saw a wider movement of peoples in commercial pursuits than the preceding ones and Prof. Maitra concludes that steel was imported from India into Egypt as object of high value in those early times about 3 to 4 thousand years before Christ.

The pottery of the Iron Age in terms of Archaeological evidence is both numerous and varid. It shows a workmanship of a high order and the painting is executed in a more subtle and artistic manner.

II

FROM CAVES TO BUILDINGS

Mohenjo Daro: Mohenjo Daro, the Mound of the Dead, is a patch of barren land some seven miles by road from Dokri on the North-Western Railway and 25 miles from Larkana in Sind. In 1923 the spade of the archaeologist revealed to an astonished world the remains of a civilization which was as highly developed as it was ancient. Before the discovery of this site it was customary to begin the ancient history of India with the invasion of the Aryans. From references in the Rigveda it was suspected that the indigenous population with whom the Vedic Aryans had to fight was numerous. But nothing complimentary could be learnt from such description by its natural enemies. The archaeological remains not only confirmed the suspicions but revealed a civilization which was the forerunner of the Vedic Aryan

Who were these Mohenjo Darian? That they were non-Aryans is self-evident. Their origin and identity have been a theme of controversy among scholars and consequently a wide variety of opinions exists. Some have, with transparent seriousness, suggested that they were Vedic Aryans, others argued that they were Sumerians After having closely examined all such theories Sir John Marshall concludes that the population of Mohenjo Daro included at least four racial types and that civilization was the offspring, not of any one race in particular, but of several—born perhaps, rather of soil itself and of the rivers than of the varied breeds of men which they sustained. Rev. Fr. H. Heras, after having deciphered the inscriptions from Mohenjo Daro expresses his well considered opinion thus: (1) that the Mohenjo Darians formed a part of the great Mediterranean race; (2) their original home was probably Libya, whose people spread over the southern countries of Europe and Egypt in its pre-dynastic days and which seems to have been an important centre of culture in ancient times; (3) this culture was brought to India by Libyans who were later called Dravidians and it improved by their mixture with the Negritoes and Kolarians who were inhabiting India at the time of their arrival.

There is not such a wide divergence of opinion regarding the age of the civilization as it exists in the case of the identity of its authors. "It is not unlikely" says Earnest Mackay, "that the site was established as early as the Stone Age". Sir John Marshall is more precise. He describes the civilization as not earlier than 3250 B.C. According to Rev. Fr. H. Heras the period of the civilization could best to described as from 5,000 B. C. to 2,500 B. C.

The *Mohenjo* Darian were, in their political composition probably a collection of different tribes and political groups. Rev. Fr. Heras has described several such groups as the Minas, the *Paravas*, the *Kavalas*, the Velalir, the Almas, the Kolis etc. These different tribes were often engaged in internecine warfare which may have resulted in a constantly changing political pattern in the fortunes of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa.

The city of Mohenjo Daro was carefully divided into wards. Possibly a service of police seems to have been in existence for the purpose of internal security by night if not by day. The City had an efficient Municipal organization and an excellent water supply and drainage system. The careful layout of the city roads and the grouping of houses indicate an efficient system of town planning. The streets were straight and fairly wide, running from east to west and north to south intersecting at right angles. The city seems to have been planned on the model of a Swastika and the purpose behind such a layout must have been dictated by reasons of war strategy. The city was well-walled and the only entrance was through the gates.

The city was peopled by a variety of classes such as priests, physicians, astrologers, supervisors of state, municipal authorities, artizans and cultivators.

The existence of roads, storehouses and granaries at Mohenjo Daro presupposes intense commercial activity. Well populated cities like Mohenjo Daro and Harappa could not have existed without extensive agriculture and cultivation of wheat and barley must have been the main [illegible]on. The harvest was carried to the storehouses and saddle quern and Muller still were used for grinding purposes. Beef, mutton, pork, poultry, fish and turtles along with milk and vegetables formed the main items of food of the Mohenjo Darians. The humped bull, the buffalo and the horse were the beasts of burden and sheep, elephants, camels, pigs and dogs were the other animals known to them. The dress consisted mainly of two long strips of cotton or woollen cloth, one worn round the loins covering the legs and the other thrown over the left shoulder and passing under the right arm, like a loose shawl. It was fashionable to wear long beards and whiskers but the upper lip was sometimes shaven. Ornaments were freely and prominently worn by all classes of society. Necklaces, fillets, armlets and finger rings were worn by men and women alike. The ornaments of the rich were worked in gold and silver; the poor had presumably to be content with those made of copper, beads, shells and terracota.

Axes, spears, daggers, bows and arrows, clubs and slings comprised the armoury of the Mohenjo Darians. The chariot was the principal means of locomotion on wheels and the walls round the city suggest a state of thorough preparedness for any hostile eventuality.

But it is in their buildings that the Mohenjo Darians reveal their sense of beauty and cultural stature.

Walls rising above the ground, exterior as well as interior, were built of burnt brick laid in mud or in mud and gypsum-mortor combined. The floors were made of brick "either at flat or on edge the latter method being almost invariable in the case of bath rooms and common whereever the flooring was exposed or subjected to excessive wear and tear." The houses show a remarkable absence of decoration but it is possible that the decoration being made of perishable material like wood must have disappeared in course of time.

The houses were of different sizes according to the purpose for which they were built. The houses opened on the road through a door which appears to be the principal means of admitting light, for windows are usually few and small. Practically all houses had adjoining wells and bathrooms and rubbish chutes formed an important part of the sanitary system. Private dustbins and public recepticles of rubbish and refuse were also conveniently placed at the sides of the streets. The roofs were flat and "were carried like the ceilings below them, on stout timbers covered with planking and beaten earth, with a protective course of brick, matting or other material between. The houses generally had two floors with the living and the sleeping rooms on the upper floor, which could be reached by a staircase from the countryyard.

Bathing seems to have been an important part of a Mohenjo Darian's round of daily duties. The number of bathrooms and the great public bath suggest so. The great bath according to Sir John Marshall appears to [illegible] been a vast hydropathic establishmen t and the [illegible] all the remains unearthed at Mohenjo

Daro. Its plan is simple; in the centre, an open quadrangle with verandahs on its four sides, and at the back of the three of the verandahs various galleries and rooms; on the south, a long gallery with a small chamber in each corner; on the east a single range of small chambers, including one with a well; on the north, a group of several halls and fair sized rooms. In the midst of the open quadrangle is a large swimming bath, some 39 feet long by 23 feet broad and sunk about 8 feet below the paving of the court, with a flight of steps at either end, and at the foot of each a low platform for the convenience of bathers, who might otherwise have found the water too deep". The layout and the construction of the great bath are almost perfect and indicative of the high degree of excellence attained by ths Mohenjo Darians in architectural planning and execution.

The Mohenjo Darian looked not only earthwards but also heavenwards.

His religious beliefs suggest many similarities with certain features of popular Hinduism. A large number of terracota tablets and figurines give us ample evidence in forming a general idea. A figure who is described by Sir John Marshall as the "proto-type of the historic Shiva" tells us that Mohenjo Darians were devotees of "Shiva". The God is "Three-faced, is seated on a low Indian throne in a typical attitude of yoga, with legs bent double beneath him, heel to heel, and toes turned to front, resting on his knees. From wrist to shoulder the arms are covered with bangles, eight smaller and three larger; over his breast is a trianglar pectoral or perhaps a series of neckl~~ess~~aces.... and round his waist a double band. The lower limbs are bare ... crowning his beard is a pair of horns meeting in a tall head dress . . ." Many points from the above description are of engrossing interest; the Mohenjo Darian Shiva, for instance, is the direct precursor of the histotric Shiva and that asceticism was an accepted method of religious devotion. The existence of objects among the ruins at Mohenjo Daro which may be described as phallus and yoni, shows a wide prevalence of Phallus worship among the Mohenjo Darians.

Cult of the Mother Goddess:—Another important aspect of the religion of the people of Mohenjo Daro is their belief in and worship of the Mother Goddess. The Mother Goddess was very widely worshipped in the Near and Middle East in ancient times and from the numerous pottery figures found at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa it seems certain that such images were kept for purposes of warship in almost every house in the Indus valley cities, probably in a recess or on a bracket on the wall. The commonest figure is that of a female, almost nude except for a short skirt fastened by a girdle to the loins and decked with much jewellery and a fan-shaped head-dress. It is possible that the Mohenjo Darians regarded her as the "guardian of the house and the village", presiding over child birth and taking a keen interest in the weal and woe of her worshippers.

The Mohenjo Darians. according to Rev. Fr. Heras, believed in a Supreme Being who was supposed to be the source of all life, symbolic of oneness and greatness, omniscient, benevolent, endowed with power of destruction and generation. He is spoken of as being three-eyed (i.e. capable of visualizing the past, present and [illegible]e) and Fish-eyed. His emblems are the trident and a snake. The Mohenjo Darians also believed in a Divine Triad,—An, Anil and Amma. Besides the Divine Triad the pantheon of the Mohenjo Darians included gods presiding over land, thunder, rain, death, the nether-world, the sun and other local and personal gods.

Temples: Relics, of an exclusively religious character at Mohenjo Daro though few, are significant, The picture of the temple carved next to an inscription on a terracota tablet shows a small and square edifice. The roofing appears to be flat "but in the four corners four spikelike finials break the flat line of the edifice. In front of the temple there was an open space over which a double awning protected the worshippers from the sun and from the rain". The temple had servants, priests and temple guards. The mode of worship must have been of showing veneration to the tridant which was the emblem of God and spending time in meditation and reflection on his greatness and other attributes. Sprinkling the sacred object with water, milk or some such other object was also considered as an act of worship.

Human sacrifices: It is highly probable that the Mohenjo Darians believed in offering Human sacrifices. The number of persons so sacrificed, according to Rev. Fr. Heras appears always to be seven or twenty one, a multiple of seven. "Those persons" says Fr. Heras, "who were going to be sacrificed were kept in prison for sometime and were supposed to be temple prisoners, and at least on one occasion they were kept in a palm-grove. The sacrifice was performed under the sacred-trees, though the actual way of performing it is not described. Two bhangis took the corpses from the place of sacrifice to the burning grounds."

Disposal of the dead: Regarding disposal of the dead the Mohenjo Darians may have followed one of the three ways (1) complete burials (2) Fractional burials and (3) Post-cremation burials. In the case of fractional burials only "a portion of the bones was collected and buried after the body had been exposed to beasts and birds. Many a time the remains of the dead were interred in earthenware jars which were then buried. In the case of post-cremation burials the remains of a cremated body were deposited in burials urns which were afterwards buried. Cremation, however, appears to be the usual method of disposal of the dead.

The extent of Indus Civilization: The uniformity of culture shown by the remains both at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa inevitably leads us conclude that the civilization—aptly called the Indus Civilivation by Sir John Marshall—must have been "deeply rooted throughout Sind and the Punjab and already consolidated for long ages before it first breaks upon our ages." This civilization of the chalcolithic periond was indissolubly connected with other civilizations like the Summerian by community of ideas and inventions. Thus the Indus civilization represents the billowing eddy in India of that mighty wave of civilization which surged over many of the ancient nations of the world.

III

THE NEW MAN APPEARS

The labouring spade of the patient archaeologist has unfolded before us the glory of Mahenjo Daro but the mystery surrounding its final abandonment and ruin still remains unsolved. What led the Mohenjo Darians to ve their flourishing city? Was it some all enveloping flood? Or was it a great natural convulsion like the one that stratified Pompei? Was it an invasion by a hostile horde which forced the natives to flee to no one apparently knows where? These questions cannot be answered to day and must await a reply till some firmer clue suddenly jumps into existence. For us Mohenjo-Daro begins as an archaeological excavation and ends as an enigma.

The next milestone on the long road of Indian history is the story of the people as told unto us by Rigveda. And what is Rigveda?

✓To the Hindu the Rigveda is a book of divine origin, a revelation (Shruti) *par excellence*, hallowed by tradition and sanctified by the unstinted awe of numberless generations. It is the most sacred of the sacred books of the Hindus, its very name signifying knowledge or wisdom and chronologically the most ancient of all ancient Aryan compilations. It is a collection of a thousand or more hymns and its sanctity and antiquity are as unique as its mode of transmission and preservation till comparatively recent times. In it breathes the spirit of the Aryan in India.

But who were these Aryans, who have left for the posterity such a unique collection of verses? It is generally accepted that they were not autochthonous or were not originally the inhabitants of India and there are some sound reasons to persume that they came from outside. The study of similarities between Sanskrit on the one hand and Greek, Latin, Avesta-Pehlavi on the other reveals a common linguistic substratum suggesting a common ancestral home. But as to where the original home lay there is no unanimity among

As different and widely separated areas as the Arctic, Mesopotamia, Kashmir, Bactria, Central Asia, Northern Europe, Central and Western Germany and the region covered by Austro-Hungary and Bohemia are proposed as the original home of the Aryans. The most widely held view is that their orginal home must have been somewhere in Central Asia and due to causes natural or otherwise they were forced to migrate *en masse* to more spacious regions and warmer climes. Somewhere on the route they separated into groups, one wending its way towards Europe and the other branching off in the direction of Persia and India. Of this group some settled in Persia and the others penetrated into India by way of the passes in the North-West region. They began to pour into India at a time when the regions between the Indus and the heart of Persia were fairly well-watered and fertile. Hence it was possible for the early Aryan invaders to come in sufficiently large numbers. They may have entered India in one or several groups but the routes did not seem to have been different.

The Aryans did not enter a geographical vacum in the Punjab. It was *already* populated with a people who were [illegible]ing and fairly advanced in civilization. Natural[illegible]aders had to fight often protracted and bloody wars for the possession of the land. In these battles the Aryans with their mobile artillery in the form of bowmen driving in swiftly moving chariots emerged *triumphant* resulting in the part destruction and part subjugation of the original inhabitants who were called *Dasyus* or *dasas* by the conquerors.

And who were the Dasyus? The Rigvedic descriptions of the people conquered by the invading Aryans suggest that the Dasyus may have been Dravidians. They called of dark complexion, "nose-less" or flat-nosed, "harsh" or of different speech, not offering the sacrifice or worship of the Aryan type but phallus worshippers. As the Aryan hordes poured into India the "Dravidians" had to retreat further inland in face of the formidable and irresistible Aryan penetration into their land. They were not barbarians for they are described as living in forts and cities with fortifications, and offered tenacious resistance to the onslaught of the Aryans. Among them were prominent tribes like tne Kikatas who contested the advance of the Bharatas towards the East and South-East. But the Aryan with his superior strength, vigour and armament enslaved some of them and drove the others further inland.

No one conclusive opinion exists about the date of the Aryan invasion, the highest suggested date being 6,000 to 4,000 B. C. (ascribed to the composition of the earliest portions of the Rigveda on the strength of the astronomical data—Tilak, Artic Home in the Vedas). But 1,500 B. C. is a safer and cauteaus date in fixing the proper settlement of the Aryans into India.

The geographical horizon of the early Aryans was bounded by the river Rasa (Araxes or Jaxartes) on the West, the Ganges on the East, the Himalayas on the North and the seas on the South. It included the fertile territory drained by the Indus and its tributaries extending as far south as the junction of the main river with its branches corresponding roughly to the present Punjab, the N. W. Province and the Kabul Vally. "We may assume", says Griswold, "that the Vedic settlements occupied the sub-montane region where the water is near the surface all the way from Kabul to Ambala and also followed the banks of the river some distance towards the sea." The river Ganges is directly mentioned but once (R. V. VI. 75, 5) and though the Vedic people had some knowledge of the sea that knowledge was neither intimate nor constant. The main features of the landscape were the rivers and the seven rivers are a point of very prominent reference in the Rigveda. With their migration into India there was a consequent changes in the climate affecting the Aryans for gone were the long and dreary winters and the year, now shows three divisions of time or seasons, known as the spring, summer and autumn.

Social Organization: The Social Organization of the Rigvedic Aryans was basically tribal. Five tribes or peoples—the Yadus, Turvasas, Druhyus, Anus and Purus are frequently mentioned and seem to have been the main components of the Vedic Nation. Each tribe had a chieftain and monarchy in some cases at least, was hereditary. The divisions of society in the main were two: the fair tall Aryans on the one hand and the dark and flat nosed Dasyus on the other. Though caste in the modern sense of the word was yet unknown occupational classes seem to have been existing. They were there, viz., the Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and Vaishyas.

The Kshatriya was the ruling class and the king was the Kshatriya *par excellence*. The Kshatriyas in their person combined the ruling and the warrior classes. They provided the rulers in times of peace and military leaders in times of war. In short they were the favoured class.

The class which was to dominate the entire Hindu ty and be the power behind the throne in Ancient and Mediaeval times was in the Vedic Age, as a class, just below the Kshatriyas. Priesthood was already developed before the Aryans entered India and the Rigveda mentions seven different kinds of priests—the Hotr, the reciting priest who sang the composed hymns being the most important. The Aryans had a fairly complicated ritual with Soma offering and fire sacrifices and it was the job of the priest to see that the ritual was properly performed. Apart from these priests, there was the Purohita who was the domestic chaplain to the king, as for instance Vishwamitra and Vashistha of Sudas and Devapi of Shantanu. The Priests were rewarded in the form of *dakshinas* from the king. The Kshatriyas and Brahmans were closely connected by ties of mutual dependence. The priest was dependent on the Kshatriya for honorarium and the Kshatriya needed him for the sacrificial ritual.

Vaishyas: The last and most numerous class was composed of the Vaishyas who were mainly occupied with agriculture and industry. They had little to do with the political, religious and intellectual life of the age. Last of all came the Shudras at the bottom of the social scale and differing from the Aryans in blood, colour and religion. They were the traditional workers, whose bounden duty it was to serve the Aryans.

Religion: The religion of the Vedic Aryans shows the stage just after the birth of the gods. The Vedic Aryans were keen in their observation of natural phenomena and childlike in their deduction of significance. Beyond every natural phenomena they postulated an agent through whose office the phenomenon made itself manifest. Their gods are in general personifications of natural phenomena. They are celestial folk, the clan of the shining ones. Their habitat is in the sky and their proper nature, light. They are immortal having the attributes of wisdom, beauty, benevolence, righteousness, and are the upholders of moral law in the Universe. Though they are many, they have a tendency to coalesce and their diversity, *many a times merges into the* unity of *interdependence.*

Moral Order: With the Rigvedic Aryans the conception of *Rita* was very familiar and their very gods are expressions of this Order in nature in some form or other. *Rita* is translated as the course of things, nature or cosmic order. It is the uniformity of nature perceived by the first philosophers behind the bewildering diversity of natural phenomena and *through this great* conception of *Rita*, "the multiplicity of nature is reduced to a unity and the multiplicity of the gods (corresponding to the multiplicity of nature) is seen to reflect a single will because all are labourers together in maintaining a single all comprehensive cosmic order."

Rigvedic gods: Generally the Rigvedic Gods are classified into three groups (1) the celestial gods (2) the atmospheric gods (3) the terrestrial gods.

The Celestial Gods: Of the celestial gods, **Dyus**, which in essence means the sky is one of the oldest and most important gods. He is described as the *father and* sometimes even the biggest father, heaven and earth being his children.

Varuna: Varuna is the most impressive and *colourful* deity of the Rigvedic Aryans. He is the king of all, gods and *men*; the self-dependent monarch, the

Universal Monarch and one possessed of occult power, He rides in a car which shines like the sun and is drawn by well-yoked steeds. He is the all powerful one who inflicts disease as a reminder and punishment of sin. He is pre-eminently the ethical god whose fellowship is broken by sin for sin is the transgression of the law of Varuna which is unchanging. He is Omnipresent, and Omniscient, lord of life and death, whose will and ordinances are followed by the gods. But he is also merciful and gracious and grants protection and happiness to his worshippers., He is the Lord of the ethical Order which is his distinctive province. He is a holy god and none can share with him the power over moral life and destiny of mankind. He is chief among the group of gods called the Adityas who may be described as the gods of celestial light. Their number is not definite for they are sometimes 6, 7, 8 and 12.

Mitra : Mitra is another god who is offen associated with Varuna. Mitra's eye is the sun who is another celestial god. Mitra or Surya drives in a car drawn by horses numbering from one to seven. He is the dispeller of darkness, illuminating the whole world, measuring days and prolonging life. He is the soul of all that moves or is stationary.

Savitru : He is the god of splendour who drives in in his golden car with a golden pole drawn by brown white footed horses and raising his two golden arms aloft rousing and blessing all beings. He observes fixed laws while the water and the wind are subject to his ordinances. The most sacred stanza of the Rigveda the *Gayatri* is addressed to him.

Vishnu : Vishnu is subordinate god who came in much prominence in later Hinduism. His main achievements are his three steps or strides, which refer to the three stages of the Sun. He is constantly associated with Indra whom he helped in slying the demon Vritra.

Pushan: Pushan is a god who looks after the cattle and bring them back when gone astray and is essentially a pastoral deity. His car is drawn by goats instead of horses. He is a special guardian of paths and knows the ways of heaven.

Ushas: The only female deity of the Rigvedic Age is Ushas, the Goddess of Dawn, extolled in hymns of unsurpassed lyrical beauty. She is the daughter born in the sky, brilliant, shining, driving in a majestic chariot drawn by ruddy horses. She is the bountiful goddess who is often propitiated to grant wealth.

The Ashvins: The Ashvins are the inseparable twins. They are wondrous, very swift, mighty strong, of great wisdom, and handsome. Their most important characteristic, however, is their power of healing for they are the divine physicians.

Atmospheric Gods:

Indra: Indra is the warrior god, the national god of the Vedic Indians, the greatest god of the middle region, pervading the air. His weapon is the thunderbolt. With Vayu as his charioteer, he drives through the air in a golden chariot. His favourite beverage is the Soma. His greatest heroic deed was the slaying of the demon Vritra who obstructed the waters. Indra fought many other demons and the Vedic Aryans devoutly turned to him to protect them in their times of need. The Maruts, Rudra and Parjanya are the other atmospheric gods.

Terrestrial Gods:

Agni: Agni who is described as butter-backed, butter-faced, butter haired with reference to the oblations which he receives and flame-haired, burning jawed, thousand eyed with reference to his flames is of a domestic nature and is spoken of as a friend and a kinsman. He is the dispeller of darkness, nightfoes, hostile magic, demons and illness. He dwells in the *Vedi* or fire-pit and is strengthened with fuel, ghee and Soma. He is a mediator and a messenger between gods and men. He is the high priest, the intercessor and the judge, and one who correct mistakes in sacrificial rituals. He is the priestly god as Indra is the warrior god.

Rigvedic ethics was essentially tribal ethics. All such behaviour as was conducive to the benefit of the tribe as a whole or would facilitate the regulation of social relations was naturally praised. Rigvedic ethics generally insisted on not to kill within the tribe or curse or deceive, gamble, or at least to cheat at gambling and indulge immoderately in wine, anger or dice. The five moral obligations towards the clan or trible formed the pivotal point in Rigvedic ethics.

Sacrifice: Sacrifice is a rite in which something is forfeited or destroyed with the object of securing divine mercy or favour or of establishing relations between a source of spiritual strenth and one in need of it. Sacrifice was a main form of worship used by the Rigvedic Aryans. The sacrificial ritual was already regularised and developed in the Indo-Iranian Period and the Rigvedic period saw further addition and elaboration. It is through sacrifice that an approach to the gods was sought and upon its proper performance depended the nature of the favour granted. This resulted in the crystalization of a group of specialists employed in the ritual as the priestly class which became increasingly important.

Social Life : The organisation of Rigvedic society was mainly tribal and within the clan or tribe the was family was the basic unit. The father was the head of the family. Women had an important and honoured position and their self development was not fettered by any of the limitations associated with their sex in later times. There was no sigma attached to woman-hood and they enjoyed a status of dignity, independence and equality. Child marriages were unknown and widow marriages common. The sacrifice had a religious as well as a social significance for it was an occassion for a large gathering. Soma was the popular drink and chariot racing the favourite sport. The warriors carried bows and arrows with the arrow-heads tipped either with horn or metal and sometimes smeared with poison. The bowman wore some kind of protective armour and besides his normal equipment carried spears and javelins.

The people lived in houses built of wood with a compound or enclosure all around openning into gates or wickets. The furniture in such houses was simple and was primarily restricted to bedsteads, divans, stools and cots made either of split bamboo or grass. The seats had cushions and the beds were made more comfortable by using mattresses, pillows and coverlets. The dress of the people was made out of wool, cotton or silk according to the status and the taste of the person. The dress of the men consisted of an oblong strip of cloth which covered the lower portion of the body, an overgarment covering upper half and a turban. The women also used some form of a turban and with the addition of a veil their dress was essentially of the same as mens'. Footwear made of grass or wood or leather was common and an umbrella and a stick completed the fashionable man's outfit.

Rigvedic economy was in the main agricultural. The Vaishyas as a class formed the bulk of agriculturists who produced the grain which along with meat and beef formed the diet of the people. Trade and commerce were not very important and barter was the best known method of economic exchange. Large herds of goats, cows, buffaloes, horses and land constituted the wealth of the nation. The political history of the Vedic period is almost hopeless in its vagueness. The Bharatas were the most important of the Rigvedic tribes and were settled in the country between the Saraswati and the Jamuna. They fought both against their Aryan rivals on the west and the non-Aryan enemies on the east. The Purus—another tribe—lived on the either side of the Saraswati and were neighbours and rivals of the Bharatas. The Anus were their allies against the Bharatas and lived on the Rawi with Druhyus to their west and the Yadus and the Turvashas probably further south,

✓Divodasa was a great king of the Bharata tribe and his descendant was Sudasa, the son of Paijavana. Divodasa successfully fought against the Purus, Yadus and Turvashas on the one hand and the Dasa chief *Shambara, the Panis, etc. on the other. Sudasa* had Vishwamitra at first as his chief priest, but later on Vashishtha being appointed in Vishwamitra's place, it led to a long and bitter rivalry among the two families. Sudasa is celebrated for his glorious victories over the illegitimate child Vyasa who begot Dhritarashtra—who was born blind—and Pandu and Vidura. Dhritarashtra was married to Gandhari, the daughter of the King of Gandhara and had 100 sons, the eldest of whom was Duryodhana. Pandu had two wives, Kunti, daughter of a King of the Yadavas and Madri, sister of Shalya, king of *Madras. Kunti gave birth to Yudisthira, Arjuna* and Bhima while Nakula and Sahadeva were the sons of Madri. Dhritarashtra being blind, Pandu became the king but after his death the former assumed charge of the Government. The five Pandavas along with their 100 cousins were brought up at *Dhritarashtra's court* and educated and trained in the art of war. The sons of Pandu always excelled the sons of Dhritarashtra at displays of sports and games and this naturally made the latter very much jealous of the former. In due course Yudhisthira was appointed the heir to the throne but seeing the exploits of the Pandvas Dhritarashtra felt apprehensive about the future of his *own sons* and agreed to a plot hatched by Duryodhana with the help of his friend Karna and his maternal uncle Shakuni. The Pandavas were beguiled into a house very skillfully built out of lac which was subsequently set on fire. But the Pandavas escaped and wandering from forest to forest went attracted the attention of the priestly class who might have been responsible for the addition of the didactic element to it so that finally the Mahabharata become not only just another Veda, but so important a Veda that to read it was to dispense with the need of reading any other Veda.

The Actors in the story: The main story of the Mahabharata deals with the deeds of the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

In the land of the Bharatas ruled a King named Shantanu, of the House of the Kurus. He had a son called Bhishma begotten by him from the goddess Ganga and who was appointed as the successor to the throne. Some time later, however, Shantanu met a beautiful fisher girl Satyavati, fell in love with her and desired to marry her. But her father agreed to this only if Shantanu would appoint the son borne by Satyavati to the throne to which Shantanu would not consent. But neither could he bring himself up to give up Satyavati. Bhishma, in the meanwhile learnt about his father's predilection and going to Satyavati's father not only renounced his claim to the throne but also declared his intention to observe the vow of chastity so as to make it impossible to constitute any claim to the throne from his side. So finally Shantanu married Satyavati who bore him two sons, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Chitrangada was killed in a battle with a Gandharva and after Shantanu's death Vichitravirya succeeded to the throne. But as Vichitravirya died childless Bhishma was requested to beget descendants by the surviving widows of Vichitravirya in accordance with the ancient custom of levirate. This Bhishma refused to do. Then Satyavati remembered her ten allied tribes of the Purus, Yadus, Turvasas, Anus, Druhyus and others. Sudas also defeated the non-Aryan tribes of the Ayus, *Sigrus*, Yakshas united under a king Bheda who attacked his kingdom from the east but Sudasa quickly returned and defeated them on the Jamuna. He was not only a great warrior but a scholar as well and tradition credits him with the composition of the 133rd hymn of *Tenth Book*. Shantanu is another King mentioned in the Rigveda. His priest Devapi *performed* a rain-inducing sacrifice for him.

But the name of *the Bharatas* is immortalised by the great epic Mahabharata. The position of the epic in our ancient literature is unique. For it is not only an epic, a work of poetic art but also a manual of morality, law and philosophy, supported by the most hoary tradition and as such possessing *unimpeachable* authority, in a word as the late Dr. V. S. Sukthankar has so aptly *put it* "the substance of our collective unconscious." But the Mahabharata has *become* so with several additions and depositions, alterations and adjustments. Essentially it is a story, *story of a* great and bloody battle fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas which resulted in the ruin of house of the Bharatas. The original Bharata describing and restricted *only to* these heroic and destructive deeds was but only a quarter of its present size. In the earliest period of its composition the Bharata must have contained both the story in the form of *the lays and at* later date their union was rendered possible as soon as the lay, formerly sung was *disassociated* from music and repeated as a heroic tale of antiquity. This union was foundation of the present epic. The story by its very must have proved immensely popular and attracted the attention of the priestly class who might have been responsible for the addition of the didactic element to it so that finally the Mahabharata become not only just another Veda, but so important a Veda that to read it was to dispense with the need of reading any other Veda.

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The story of Ramayana, the other great epic of dia deals with the life of Rama, his stay in the forest for 14 years, the abduction of Sita by Ravana who is killed by Rama and their happy return to Ayodhya.

Though many of the episodes in the Mahabharata may smack of the supernatural and the fantastic, it cannot be gainsaid that the story of the Bharata war has a historical foundation and may be tentativly dated in *circa.* 1,400 B. C. But what is of interest to us is not so much the historical material in the epic as the social, economic and religious conditions revealed by it.

Political Conditions: The India of the epic period reveals the existance of a number of peoples, clans settled in small patches of territory. Politically they were independent of each other though ethnically and in matters of religion they were bound by identity or similarities. These clans were often at war with each other which resulted in adjustments in the proportions of their territories from time to time. Many of them were monarchical in constitution but republican states were not rare. Monarchy, where prevalent was hereditary and in the republican states the councils of tha elders managed the affairs of the state. Generally the clans living on the borders of the Aryan colonies were republican. The King had an absolute power of punishment and he personified the rule of justice.

The Kuru Kingdom: The kingdom of the Kurus, which was incidentally, the most important and powerful in the epic times, extended from the Saraswati to the Ganges and was divided into three parts: (1) Kurujangala (2) Kuru, and (3) Kurukshetra. The capital of the kingdom of the Kurus was Asandivant. The Kings of the Kuru race belonged to the Pura-Bharata family and Parikshita who lived in the 9th century B. C. was the first historically important king of Ancient India. He is referred to in the Vedas, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. He was learned in the science of the duties of kings and was credited with many noble qualities. He was a highly intelligent ruler, a great hero, wielding a powerful bow and never missing his aim. Under him the country was prosperous, tranquil and happy. He was married to a Madras princess and ruled for 24 years, dying at the age of sixty.

Janamejaya : Parikshita had four sons (1) Janamejaya (2) Bhimsena (3) Ugrasena, and (4) Shrutasena. Janamejaya the eldest, after Parikshita's death succeeded to the throne. He conquered Taxila where he is supposed to have performed the serpent-sacrifice. The conquest of Taxila must have been preceded by the extension of his sway over the country of the Madras or Central Punjab. He is also reported to have performed two horse-sacrifices which were the occasions on which he had disputes with the Brahmans. After Janamejaya ruled Satanika, Asvamedhadatta, Adhisima Krishna and Nichakshu in succession. During the reign of Nichakshu the Kaurava capital Hastinapura was carried away by the Ganges and capital was now transferred to Kaushambi. In the following period through a series of calamities which they suffered the Kauravas lost their importance and the political centre of gravity was shifted to Videha.

King Janaka of Videha : The most prominent and notable figure of the period was King Janaka, the philosopher King of Videha. Janaka is described as a *Samrat* (Supreme King) and as such must have wielded considerable power. The Kingdom of Videha corresponded y to the modern district of Tirhut in North Bihar in the 7th century B. C. when Janaka ruled. The capital of Videha was Mithila, identified with the small town of Janakapura just within the Nepal border. Janaka was famed for his patronage to culture and philosophy. His court was thronged by philosophers from Koshala and the Kuru-Panchala countries.

With the story of Janaka we have moved on almost to the 7th century B. C. While these tribes were fighting for political supremacy and kings were enthroned and dethroned, in the lonely forests were seen the retiring figures of the hermits and sages who entirely unaffected by the turmoil of political struggle were lost in meditation and stumbled upon a unique discovery that almost revolutionized India's thought. About this great discovery more in the next chapter.

IV

THE GREAT DISCOVERY

THE interval between the age of the Rigveda and the epic times witnessed the growth and development of political, economic, social and religious conditions. Rigvedic polity shows that Indo-Aryan tribal society was being slowly transformed into the aggregate of tribes or the 'folk'. The tribe, in the Rigvedic period was divided into a number of social groups called the 'vishas' which meant either a territorial division or else a communal group. The government of each tribal unit was usually vested in a monarch whose powers were regulated by the tribal assemblies. The tribal society, as we have already seen, was divided into classes. Gradually the king emerged as the most important personality almost invested with an aura of divinity and this synchronised with the evolution of leagues of tribes or tribal amalgamations.

The epic also reveals the existence of small states ruled over by kings. The Kshatriya as a class is still the most important element in political life. The classes in Rigvedic society now tend to harden into fixed divisions but such barriers as separate them are neither irrevocable nor constant. The function of racial synthesis is going on apace and Aryan society shows many a different feature as a result of amendment to ethnic ideas forced through the passage of time. The geographical horizon has considerably widened and now we see the Bharata kingdom impinging upon almost the very nerve centres of Madhyadesha with most interesting consequences. Social customs and economic conditions are undergoing a constant process of evolution consequent upon the onward infiltration of the Aryans.

In the sphere of religion the intervening period shows a very complicated development in the sacrificial ritual. A new feature is the growing number of hermits frequenting lonely forests either for the regular and uninterrupted performance of sacrificial ceremonies or for the proper performance of meditation and ascetism. This growth of the sacrificial ritual is most clearly reflected in the liturgical literature of the Brahmanas and the Atharva Veda mirrors with high fidelity the effects of ideological adjustments due to racial fusion.

But it was in the philosophical sphere that the passage of centuries saw a most significant discovery which can aptly be described as the great discovery. What this great discovery was we shall now see.

The 27th Hymn of the First Mandala of the Rigveda contains a prayer to Agni (Fire) which reads follows :

"With reverence I shall worship thee who art long tailed like a horse, Agni the king of worship.

May he our son of strength, proceeding on his broad way, the propitious, become bountiful to us.

Thus protect us always, thou who hast a full life, from the mortal who seeks to do us harm, whether near or a far.

And mayest thou, O Agni, announce to the gods this our newest efficient Gayatri song.

Let us partake of all booty that is highest and that is middle; help us to the wealth that is nearest.

O god with bright splendour, thou art the distributor. Though instantly flowest for the liberal giver in the wave of the river, near at hand".

Then the first chapter of the Aitareya Brahmana of the Rigveda declares thus:

"They offer the Agni-Vishnu rice-cake which belongs to the Dikshiniya Ishti (and put its several parts) on eleven potsherds. They offer it really to all the deities of this (Ishti) without foregoing any one. For Agni is all the deities and Vishnu is all the deities. For these two (divine) bodies Agni and Vishnu are the two ends of the sacrifice...Here they say, if there be eleven potsherds on which portions of the rice-cake are put, and (only) two deities, Agni and Vishnu, what arrangement is there for the two, or what division?

of eight syllables and the Gayatri is Agni's metre... The Hotr must recite seventeen verses for the wooden sticks to be thrown into the fire."

Now the following extract is from the Chhandogya Upanishad.

"All this is Brahman. Let a man meditate on that (visible world) as beginning, ending and breathing in it (the Brahman). Now man is a creature of will. According to what his will is in this world, so will he be when he has departed this life. Let him therefore have his will and belief.

The *intelligent*, whose *body is spirit*, whose *form* is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like ether (omnipresent and invisible), from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed; he who embraces all this, who never speaks and is never surprised.

He is myself whithin the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He is *also my self within the heart*, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds...myself within the heart, that is Brahman."

The three extracts quoted above epitomise the trends of thought in three distinct epochs. The hymn from the Rigveda brings out the salient characteristics of the philosophy of the people. It is enlivened with *childlike simplicity and poetic grasp. The Rigvedic rishis* observed the natural phenomena like thunder, lightening and rain and the wonderful nature and brilliance of fire and it is power over darkness. They personified the powers of nature which in virtue of their greatness and strength became their gods. We saw earlier how the Rigvedic gods fall into three regular and distinct classes. These gods are divinities only in a specific sense for "though called 'gods' they are necessarily conceived in a human mould and are regarded as being actuated by the same motives and passions as the persons that conceive them." They are necessarily anthropomorphic and point to a conviction that "the visible world is not in itself final and that there is a reality lying hidden beyond it. Maxmuller describes these ideas as henotheistic meaning thereby that each god is addressed "as for the time being the only god in existence with an entire forgetfulness of all other gods." Another characteristic of the Rigvedic gods is that they are surprisingly close to nature and are not completely personalised.

The Conception of Rita: The Conception of *Rita* has a place of importance and significance in vedic thought. *Rita* originally meant uniformity of nature or the ordered course of things such as is indicated by regular occurrence of natural phenomena. The vedic gods are essentially the agents who maintain the cosmic order and the order of moral law, the latter sense being the natural outcome of the former. When once this common trait or tendency in the different gods was observed it was not difficult to arrive at the unity of the godhead and vague hints of such a conception are already given in the Rigveda.

While vedic thought was developing on
indicated above the religion of the people was
ming a more complex nature. Sacrifice was

method of propitiation and in course of time the ritual of sacrifice was characterised by such complications that it produced a naturally sceptical reaction. Sacrifice, in the beginning, was means to an end but as time passed it threatened to become almost the end in itself. Thinking minds consequently questioned its efficacy and the reaction came in the form of Upanishadic speculations.

The Upanishads : The Upanishads are a body of texts containing ideas so bold and varied that the age that produced such a literature may justifiably be described as an age of intellectual revolution. The Upanishads are as many as two hundred in number but hardly more than a dozen are of primary importance. These may generally be regarded as pre-Buddhistic and show a similarity of method and conclusions. So different are tenor and nature of these conclusions that we may justly regard with Dr. Dasgupta that "the passage of the Indian mind from the Brahmanic to the Upanishadic thought is probably the most remarkable event in the history of philosophic thought."

Non-Brahmanic Influence : So different are the Upanishads in their boldness of approach and startling nature of conclusions that scholars have not unnaturally taken them to be the embodiment of Kshatriya thought as opposed to Brahmanic speculations. We read of Brahmanas going to the Kshatriyas for the highest knowledge and it is probable that the Upanishads incorporate the philosophy of non-Brahmanic schools which has ultimatly found its culmination in the hands of the Brahmans.

Two Central Concepts: "All the thoughts of the Upanishads", observes Deussen, "move around two fundamental ideas. These are (1) The Brahman and (2) the Atman". These two terms are generally so used ase to suggest synonymity but instances in which they are fundamentally used in contradistinction to each other are not rare. When used indiscriminately both the terms signify the inner essence of the individual as well as of the whole world and as such cannot be considered separate from each other, but whenever the difference is sought to be made Brahman means the eternal principle and Atman the same principle realized in ourselves.

Atman: The etymology of the word Atman is doubtful and the development of its meaning has gone through three distinct stages—(1) breath. (2) soul (3) self. The origin of the conception, however, could be sought in the later Vedic tendency of viewing the whole world as a cosmic individual. Atman, in the words of Sir S. Radhakrishnan "is the subject which persists throughout the changes, the common factor in the states of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth and final deliverance. It is the simple truth that nothing can destroy. Death does not touch it nor vice dissolve it. Permanence, continuity, unity, eternal activity are its characteristics. It is a world self-complete. There is nothing outside it to set against it."

of the universe, the *power which presents itself to us* materialized in all existing things, which creates, sustains, *preserves*, and receives back into itself all worlds, the infinite eternal divine power. And this Brahman revealed itself as Sat (being) chit (thought) and Ananda (Bliss).

✓Atman-Brahman: (1) Thus *by an analysis of all* subjective and objective phenomena the Upanishadic thinkers arrived at the concepts of Atman and Brahman. To them Atman the self of man consisted "in the truly objective, which can never become an object. It is the person that sees, not the object seen. It *is not* the bundle of qualities called the "Me" but the I which remains beyond and behind *inspecting all these* qualities." Then through a supreme and memorable *sweep of intuition* emerged the epoch-making concept that Brahman is Atman. The enunciation of this doctrine which could be simply expressed by the equation—Brahman = Atman was so revolutionery *that it* marks the most important advance in the whole history of philosophy. The bold *declaration of these thinkers* that the Individual as well as the world are the *manifestation of the same* reality and are therefore, essentially one forms the pivotal point of subsequent Indian thought. In this single utterance Tat Tvam Asi (that thou art) are fused two distinct *currents of* thought the one resulting from the desire to understand the true nature of man and the *other*, that of the objective world and the fusion of two such outwardly *different but inwardly similar* conceptions into one is the chief point of Upanishadic thought.

Ethics. The discovery of the identity of the subjective with the objective, Atman with *Brahman* had natural repercussions on ethical ideas. The basis of Upanishadic ethics is to be found in the conception of evil, not as transgression of the rule of the gods or negligence of sacrificial ritual as in the earlier times but as the result of a metaphysical error which sees variety alone where there is also the unity of Brahman. Empirical thought, failing to grasp the ultimate reality, distorts it or cuts it up into parts and presents them as distinct from one another. Evil is due on the practical side to this mistaken view of reality as finiteness is on the theoretical side. Hence along with this change in the ethical concept was a similar change in behaviour. No longer was sacrificial ritual regarded as the way to the Beyond but the removal of Ahamkara, the inculcation of detachment (*Vairagya*) the training through *Shravana*, *Manana* and *Ninidhyasana* resulting in self-realization is the direction given by the Upanishadas in the ethical sphere. Moral conduct according to the Upanishads is self realized conduct, "if by the self we mean not the empirical self, with all its weakness and vulgarity, selfishness and smallness, but the deeper nature of man, free from all fetters of selfish individuality."

Significance: Such was the advance of Upanishadic thought over the speculations of the Vedas that it signifies not a continuation but a revolutionery departure from the latter. Gone were the days of thoughts of shadowy gods lurking over the mountains and wandering in the clouds, shininig with the lightening and roaring with thunder, for man had found God that was him and no longer need he go to the sacrificial post to propitiate Him. For how can one propitiate his own self that is Him, One can only understand him. Thus was ritualism replaced by knowledge, external deeds by comprehension.

V

TOWARDS AN EMPIRE

THE srory which was narrated heretofore was essentially of the tract of land that was, more or less, completely aryanised. But now the scene shifts and we turn towards Madhyadesha, or to be more precise to Magadha.

Magadha occupies a unique and *proud place in the* annals of Ancient India. The land which, echoed the spiritual wnd ethical teaching of Gautama, the Buddha and Mahavira, the Jina, saw in its passage of time the rise and fall of mighty monarchies. But more important than these political associations is the Aryan-non-Arayan cultural complex which always permeates the history of Magadha. In its historical, social, religious and philosophical make-up the land presents absorbing problems of primal diversities and ultimate synthesis. At the time the vedic Aryans were making efforts to penetrate eastwards Magadha probably contained a population characterised by peculiar ideas and customs of its own.

The land that acquired such unique fame in later centuries was not looked upon with favour by the vedic Aryans. The Magadha was thought fit to be a sacrificial victim and *fever is wished way to him by a hymn of the* **Atharva Veda.** The Magadha is regarded as a close *friend of the Vratya and a Brahmana living in Magadha* is called a Brahmana by courtesy only. All these indications clearly show that vedic times Magadha was inhabited by a people with an unvedic civilazation and an unvedic Aryan—if not non-Aryan—culture. The significance of it must be, then, sought in the fact that Maga- was not fully Brahmanized then. Thus it is that we find that the teachings of Gautama, the Buddha spread with so much comparative ease in Magadha and it is also significant that it was in this land that the final transition from tribe to an empire took place.

The Four Kingdoms: With the passage of time Magadha was slowly becoming the centre of political activity. The Pali Buddhist texts often mention the four kingdoms and the sixteen peoples. The four kingdoms were of Magadha, Koshala, Vatsa and Avanti.

Magadha: The capital of the kingdom of the Magadhas was Rajagriha. Bimbisra, a contemporary of Gautama the Buddha ruled over it. We know that Bimbisara had at least three wives (1) Kosladevi, sister of Pasenadi of the Koshalas (2) a Videhan lady from Mithila mother of Ajatashatru, and (3) a Licchavi princess from Vaishali. He is reported to have ascended the throne at the age of fifteen and ruled for fifty two-years. He was a devotee of the Buddha and helped much to further the growth of his creed. His death was a sad one for his son Ajatashatru, who succeeded him, tortured him to death. At Bimbisara's death Kosaladevi died of grief and her brother confiscated the village of Kasi which was given as pinmony. This enraged Ajatashatru who declared war upon Pasenadi. At first he was victorious but was later taken captive. Ajatshatru then gave an undertaking not to resort to violence again, was released and in order to seal the new friendship Pasenadi gave him his daughter Vajra in marriage. He also made war on the Licchavis of Vaishali and through the treachery of a Brahmana Vassakara destroyed them. He fortified his capital Rajagriha apprehending an attack by Pradyota of Avanti but we do not know whether it ever wrapped about with strips of cloth and deftly painted, and turned it loose on the bank of a certain lake near the country of his enemy. Within the belly of the elephant sixty men walked back and forth; every now and then, they loaded their shovels with elephant dung and dumped it out. A certain woodman saw the elephant and thinking to himself, 'just the thing for our king.' went and told the king, 'Your Majesty, I saw a noble elephant, pure white even as the peak of Kelasa, just the sort of elephant your Majesty would like.' Udayana set out after the elephant, recited the spell but it failed to work on the wooden elephant. In the meanwhile Pradyota, with his army closed in upon him, had him arrested and thrown into a prison. After this he went and caraoused for three days. Udayana came to know about the king's caroausal and expressed contempt at the behaviour of a king who kept another king in prison and made merry. Pradyota heard this, came to the prison and agreed to release Udayana on the condition that the charm be revealed to him. After a little hesitation Udayana agreed to teach the charm to Pradyota's daughter. Pradyota told his daughter that the teacher was a leper and to Udayana that his pupil was a hunchback. This was done evidently to prevent them from falling in love with each other. So the tuition started with the teacher separated by a screen. Mispronunciations of certain words by Vasavadadatta, the pupil, provoked Udayana into saying; 'Dunce of a hunchback, materialized. Soon after his father's death, we are told, he went to see the Buddha and a long conversation ensued which is recorded in the Digha Nikaya. He built the *fortified town of Patliputra* which later on became the capital of Magadha. His reign lasted for thirty-*two years.*

Koshala: The *Kingdom of the* Koshalas was ruled over by Pasenadi who was also called Agnidatta. He was educated at Taxila, the famous seat of learning, and as a ruler gave himself wholeheartedly to his administrative duties and valued the companionship of wise and good men. He was a prominent follower of the Buddha and his close friend. He kneely desired to be matrimonially connected with the Shakyas who, however, cheated him by giving a slave girl Vasabhakhattiya in marriage *to him.* This so much angered his son and successor Vidudabha that he declared a war on the Shakyas and massacred them. The capital of the Koshalas was Shravasti.

Udayana: The Kingdom of the Vatsas was ruled over by Udayana, the hero of many heroic and romantic legends. How he contrived to *marry Vasavadatta the* daughter of Pradyota of Avahti is a charming story. King Pradyota, *nicknamed the Fierce*, of Avanti, we are told, one day asked his minister whether he knew of any other king who was as mighty and glorious as him. The minister told Pradyota about Udayana of Kaushambi. This enraged Pradyota who wanted to have Udayana arrested. This, the minister pointed out, was not easy as Udayana knew an elephant charm by using which he could drive away elephants. Then the king *suggested a*

He had a mechanical elephant made of wood, wrapped about with strips of cloth and deftly painted, and turned it loose on the bank of a certain lake near the country of his enemy. Within the belly of the elephant sixty men walked back and forth; every now and then, they loaded their shovels with elephant dung and dumped it out. A certain woodman saw the elephant and thinking to himself, 'just the thing for our king.' went and told the king, 'Your Majesty, I saw a noble elephant, pure white even as the peak of Kelasa,—just the sort of elephant your Majesty would like.' Udayana set out after the elephant, recited the spell but it failed to work on the wooden elephant. In the meanwhile Pradyota, with his army closed in upon him, had him arrested and thrown into a prison. After this he went and caraoused for three days. Udayana came to know about the king's caroausal and expressed contempt at the behaviour of a king who kept another king in prison and made merry. Pradyota heard this, came to the prison and agreed to release Udayana on the condition that the charm be revealed to him. After a little hesitation Udayana agreed to teach the charm to Pradyota's daughter. Pradyota told his daughter that the teacher was a leper and to Udayana that his pupil was a hunchback. This was done evidently to prevent them from falling in love with each other. So the tuition started with the teacher separated by a screen. Mispronunciations of certain words by Vasavadadatta, the pupil, provoked Udayana into saying; 'Dunce of a hunchback, your lips are too thick and your cheeks too pudgy. I have a mind to beat your face in. Say it this way.'. Then Vasavadatta replied in anger 'What do you mean by those words? Do you call such as I a hunchback? Villain of a lepper that you are.' At this Udayana lifted the fringe of the curtain and behold, instead of an ugly hunchback he saw the charming and beautiful Vasavadatta. So surprised was he that the words 'who are you' could hardly pass his lips. 'I am Vasavadatta, the daughter of Pradyota of Avanti' replied the maiden. Now the truth was out. There was no more learning for her and teaching for him and so madly were they in love with each other that impatiently they made bold plans of running away together. Udayana bid his time and one day mounting a fast elephant escaped with Vasavadatta. The king's guards followed him but he had taken leather bags full of coins with him from which he scattered the coins on the ground. While his pursuers delayed because of their greed for silver, Udayana reached his own stockade, built without the city, and lived happily ever after.

The Sixteen Peoples: Besides these four great kingdoms the Pali books mention twelve clans: (1) Amga, Kasi, Vajji, Mala, Cheti, Kuru, Panchala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Gandhra and Kamboja. The list is more or less tribal and not geographical. Most of the kings mentioned in the foregoing pages were devoted followers of Gautama, the Budha who lived and preached in the same age. Numerous are the occasions when the Pali books refer to the visits of these kings and their conversation with the 'Light of Asia'.

But first we shall see how he started his life before Gautama became the "Light of Asia".

all through the centuries after his death. Gleanings from the earliest accounts reveal that Shudhodana, a petty Shakyan chieftain with his capital at Kapilavastu, was his father. Gautama was born in the Lumbini forest and after seven days after his birth his mother died. After the death of his mother he has brought up by his mother's sister. He was brought up with the same pomp and glory as would any Indian prince be brought up in those days. Three palaces were built for his use: one for summer, the other for the winter and the third for the rainy season. In these palaces he spent his days surrounded by female dancers and musicians in idle nothings and undisturbed peace. At a young age he was married to Rahulamata (known as Yashodhara in later accounts). Soon Gautama tired of the melancholy succession of the days of cloying happiness and was disturbed and restless. Then on various occasions, while out on pleasure drives, he saw an old man, a sickman, a dead body and a recluse, sights which he had never seen before. These turned his thoughts from pleasure to the fundamental problems of here and hereafter. The gentle mumurings of dissatisfiction assumed in course of time, a definite form in the shape of his resolve to become an ascetic. Then news came that a son was born unto him, and his resolve became firm, shorn of all traces of hesitation, and looking on his wife and child in their jewelled chamber for the last time he left the limits of the town, shaved off his hair and beard and adopted the life of a wandering religious beggar. Now he wanted to make an unending effort to understand life and its problems for which he had abandoned the trappings of royalty and opulance for a life of few wants and fewer vexations. His first step in this direction was to apprentice himself in turn to two teachers Alara Kalama and Uddaka putta, who he thought may provide an answer to the disturbing thoughts of his mind. They did not satisfy him and he turned away from both of them. Then still in the search of the Right and in quest of the excellent road to peace beyond compare, he wended his way to the camp township at Uruvela, sat himself under a under'a fig tree in contemption of deliverance. There he reflected on the causes leading to this all pervading misery called existence and found a way out of it in the form of his concept of Nirvana. Soon after this event of epoch making significance he went about preaching his doctrine from place to place for 45 years, during which time he wielded his monastic organisation into a unique force in many respects. Then at the age of eighty he laid down that last body of his betwixt the twin shala trees in Kushinara and passed away into Pari-Nirvan with his last message to his followers scarcely out of his lips: "decay is inherent in all component things work out your salvation with diligence."

His personality: The portrait of the Buddha as revealed in the Pali books is that of a towering personality. He was a man of stately build and royal mein. He had a rich and resonant voice and there was always on his face that lustre and glory which come of supreme peace. He was affable and of an equable temper which he rarely lost even under extreme provocation. He was a master of the art of quick *repartee* and a ready story teller of amusing and sarcastic tales surcharged with obvious moral preaching. He was an excellent diner out and was always sought by kings and commoners alike. He was a fearless critic of the Brahmanas and their teaching and ridiculed the meaningless pomp of the sac- l ritual of the of the out-moded Vedas. From his innumerable utterances we get a picture of a rational thinker and a confident reformer, a prince turned a religious wanderer and a philosopher turned a moralist. Indeed it was his magnificently unique personality which contributed in no less a measure to the wide spread of his system winning for it royal favour and popular support.

His Teaching: The fundamental basis over which the very super structure of subsequent Buddhist thought is formed is the acceptance of unending misery as a concomitant condition of life. The Buddha presumes that life and all that is associated with it is nothing but pain and proceedine from this starting point, he strives to discover an escape from this all envolping sorrow. Having accepted this central fact of sorrow, he inquires into its cause and promptly comes to the conclusion that ignorance—abject ignorance—is the prime cause of it. As an answer to the problem of the starting point of sentient existence he formulates the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha's most important contribution to contemporary thought is his formulation of the four noble truths and the theory of dependent origination. The theory in all probability had been at least, in parts, borrowed from contemporary ideas in the Samkhya system but the originality of it lies in the complete cycle it attempts at present. Ignorance, it says, leads to confections (*Samaskaras*) which in turn produce conciousness, sense organs, contact, sensation, perception, grasping, existence, births, old age, disease, and misery. To dispel ignorance is to acquire the means to Nirvana. Practically the adherent must lead an ideally moral life and intellectually beyond every sentient phenomenon he must perceive impermanence, misery and absence of a lasting entity (soullessness).

Nirvana: The summum bonum of all spiritual exertion according to Buddhist thought is Nirvana. Nirvana is explained *as a complete* extinction of all such causes which make themselves manifest in existence. It means no more coming back to this world of suffering, a state beyond good and evil, beyond happiness and pain, beyond longing and quietitude. It is in fact *the state* indescribable.

Ethics: Buddhist thought is essentially of an ethical nature and philosophy, at least in the early stages, is *but* incidental. Buddhism, as it started, was an ethical monastic movement and the problem of moral living is *the central pivot* of all *Buddhist philosophy*. Buddhist conception of moral living is embodied in the Noble Eight-fold Path which lays an overwhelming emphasis on right speech, right action, right livelihood, right exertion, right recollection and right mindfulness. To his disciples the Buddha says, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not live a life of impurity or lying or drinking intoxicating liquors."

✓The Samgha: Religious mendicants *leading a life* of seclusion and piety and wandering from place to place was not an isolated phenomenon in Gautama's days. The Pali sacred texts speak of such bodies as the Parivarajakas who wandered singly or in groups and took up their temporary abode in houses or huts set apart by good laymen. Many of them practised their own theories of holy living but more often than not they *followed the* eachings of a single master and were called *Samghas* or *ganas.* We are told of six such teachers who had their own groups. The history of religious mendicancy can be traced to a more remote antiquity than the time immediately preceding the rise of the Buddha and it is more than probable that the Buddhist monastic order was modelled on the existing systems. But the pecularity of the Buddhist system lay in this that their monastic order had better solidarity and regularity and represented the maximum organization in Hindu religious life and "was pervaded by a spirt of intense localisation." As time went the rules of admission and initiation were formulated on a very distinct basis. The Buddhist Samgha had a complete control over the discipline and conduct not only of the group but also the individual and as such was armed with various rules and regulations designed to meet any contingency. It was with the help of such an organization, perhaps the first of its kind in the religious history of the world, that Buddhism contrived to live and spread practically all over India and the far east.

Mahavira, the Jina: The teaching of Mahavira, the Jina are a product of the same intellectual reaction as Buddhism and the Upanishadic thought. Another characteristic which Jainism shared with Buddhism was that it was primarily a Kshatriya religious movement and as such was a protest against the senseless sacrificial slaughter and the extravagant pretensions of the Brahmanical priestly class.

Vardhamana Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, according to traditional accounts, was the son of a nobleman Siddhartha of Kundapura, or Kundagarama, a suburb of Vaishali. Siddhartha was well connected with the then ruling aristocracy through ties of marriage and we are told that Trishala his wife was a sister of the king of Vaishali. Mahavira seems to have made good use of his position in the propagation of his creed *in later years.* Vardhamana lived in the house of his parents till their death, after which he succeeded along with *his brother Nandivardhana to* whatever principality they had. He was married to Jashoda and had from her a daughter called Anoja, or Priyadarshana who was married to Jamali. This Jamali was, in the early year, a prominent disciple of Mahavira but later on ended in being *openly hostile to* his father-in-law. At the age of twenty-eight Mahavira took up the spiritual life and for twelve years thence practised dire austerities after which he declared himself as the *Kevalin* or the Perfect One. The last thirty years of his life he passed in teaching his religious theory to the people and organising his order of ascetics. For *some years* he was a close associate of Makkhali Gosala, another religious teacher of the time, but this friendship came to an end on account of certain doctriual differences between the two philosopers.

His Teachings: The Upadishads maintain that Being is one, permanent, without beginning, change or end. The Jainas, on the other hand, hold that *Being is* not of a persistent and unalterable nature and is "joined to *production, continuation* and destruction". "This theory, call the Indefiniteness of Being (*Anekantavada*); it comes to this; existing things are permanent only as regards their substance, but their accidents or qualities originate and perish. To explain; a material thing continues forever to exist as matter. This *matter* however, may assume any shape and quality. It is clear that

Brahmanical speculations are concerned with transcendental Being while the Jain view deals with Being as given in common experience."

"Different from matter and material things are the souls. There is an infinite number of them and they differ in size according as the body they occupy is large or small. Their characteristic mark is intelligence, which may be observed by extrinsic causes, but never destroyed. They are of two kinds; mundane and liberated. The former are the embodied souls of living beings in the world and who are subject to rebirth, the latter are embodied no more and they dwell in a state of perfection on top of the universe. They have reached Nirvana."

The Jainas regard *ahimsa* as their highest duty. They believe in Karma which they designate as of eight types. The highest goal, according to them, is to get rid of all Karma and to acquire no new Karma and finally to pass away into Nirvana. To this end their ethics is designed and includes right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. They also enjoin upon the followers the observance of the five vows which are very much similar to the Buddhist commandments.

Jainism, like Buddhism, was in the beginning confined to Magadha. While Buddhism through a powerful organisation and with the help of royal patronage was able to spread far and wide Jainism did not succeed in winning as many followers but unlike Buddhism even today has many influential votaries in India.

Udayin: But to return to the story of Magadha The successor of Ajatashatru is mentioned by the Puranas as Darshaka and Naga-Dasaka by the Ceylon chronicles. He was succeeded by Udayin, who *during his father's reign ruled as a viceroy at Champa. Udayin* was succeeded by Nandivardhana who was *followed by* Mahanadin. Names of Munda and Anuruddha are also mentioned but no difinate information is possible today. The kings of Magadha after Bimbisara, according to the Mahavamsa were all parricides and the citizens in anger drove them away, banished the dynasty and raised an official called Shishunaga to the throne.

Shishunaga: Shishunaga, according to the commentary on the Mahavamsa was a son of a Licchavi raja from a courtesan. He reigned for 18 years. His greatest achievement was the destruction of the power of the Pradyota dynasty of Avanti which sebsequently left the power of Magadha without a rival and thus prepared the ground for the beginning of Imperial Magadha.

Kakavarna: Kakavarna who succeeded Shishunaga is *described as good to his objects,* a hater of Brahmanas and a great non-believer. He was a Buddhist and the second Buddhist Council was held during his reign in the capital, which during his father's rule was at Rajagriha, but was now transferred to Pataliputra. He seems to have suffered a violent and tragic end.

Successors: Kalashoka or Kala Varna was succeeded by his ten *sons who are supposed to* have ruled simultaneously. The Puranas tell us that the Shaishunagas *were supplanted by the Nandas.*

Mahapadmananda: The first Nanda king was Mahapadmananda who is described by the Puranas as born of a Shudra mother. Curtis, the *Greek historian,* says that the first Nanda was an indigent barber, who being not uncomely in appearance had gained the affections of the queen of the last Shaishunaga. Through her influence he gained the confidence of the reigning monarch. Afterwards he treacherously murdered the king and under the pretence of acting as guardian to the royal children usurped supreme authority. Bana in his Harshacharita says that Kaka-Varna, the last Shaishunaga had his throat cut in the viscinity of the city. Mahapadmananda was also known as Ugrasena.

The Puranas credit the first Nanda king with the destruction of Kshatriyas and describe him as the sole monarch of the earth, probably meaning thereby, that he had overthrown all the dynasties like the Ikshvakus, Panchalas, Kashi, Haihayas, Ashmakas, Kurus, Maithilas and Shurasenas. Kharavela in his Hathi Gumpha inscription refers to a Nanda Raja in such terms as to indicate Nanda sovereignty over Kalinga which fact would not entirely rule out Nanda conquest of Ashmaka and other regions lying further south. The first Nanda had not only a big empire under his control but also a a huge army and a full treasury. According to Curtis, he had 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2000 four horsed chariots and 3000 elephants. He seems to have ruled for 25 years.

Mahapadma was succeeded by his eight sons who ruled in succession. They are assigned only 12 years. The last Dhana Nanda met his death at the hands of Chandragupta Maurya, helped by his famous minister Chanakya or Kautilya. No details of the dynastic revolution are available, but it my be surmised that Kautilya was helped by Brahmanas and the people for, we are told that the Nanda king was detested and *held cheap by his subjects.*

The Persian Invasions: In the first half of the 6th century B. C. the North West portion of India presented a tempting spectacle to a foreign invader. There were various small states which were hostile towards each other and Cyrus (522, 486 B. C.) succeeded in establishing his hold over a considerable part of the North-West territories. Xerxes (486-456 B. C.) continued to maintain the hold in the Gandhara region. *Politiclally the effects of* the Persian Invasion where almost negligible, but in the cultural sphere, the introduction of the Kharoshti alphabet, the Persepolitan capital in Architecture and the format of the Ashokan Edicts betray Persian influence.

pressed the spirits of the Macedonians that they clamoured to go back home. Thus the only effect of Alexander's raid was the establishment of several Yavana settlements in the North-West Provinces of India. But the indirect effect was not small. Though Alexander's thundering legions had but scarcely clawed the fringes of Bharata Varsha, they produced one very desirable effect. The petty states, often at cross purposes with one another, had their power destroyed. The logical sequence of which was the glory of the great Mauryas and the still greater Guptas.

VI

THE FIRST EMPIRE

WITH the advent of the Maurya dynasty Ancient Indian history emerges from the ages of legend and saga and enters an era of surer historical tradition and known chronology. The Maurya dynasty, unique though it is in many respects, is preeminently remarkable inasmuch as it is the first Magadhan dynasty to establish a sovereign Indian empire and give it a strong sense of historical unity and political cohesion.

Chandragupta Maurya: Soon after the retreat of Alexander from the outermost fringes of India Chandragupta, the Maurya, encompassed the extinction of the then ruling house of the Nandas, usurped sovereign power and became the first historical emperor of India.

Origin and Early Life: The rise of Chandragupra was so sudden and dramatic that he has been described as an adventurer, a seeker of political fortune and a man of base birth soaring suddenly into preeminence. A thick growth of insinuations and legendary tales has deepened the mystery surrounding the rise of Chandragupta.

The Commentary on the Pali chronicle Mahavamsa tells us that Chandragupta was a son of a Maurya chieftain who was killed in a petty war.| Chandragupta's mother escaped to Pataliputra and when he was born, managed to give him over to some cowherds. One day he was seen playing at dispensing justice with his playmates in a wood by a Brahmana called Chanakya who, taking a fancy to him, took him over and gave him an intensive and extensive education at Taxila. After this *the Brahmana recruited an army for* Chandragupta who started raiding operations and gradually made himself the master of India.

The Brahmana, Chanakya, also known as Kautilya, was Chandragupta's mentor and guide. He is the reputed author of the Arthashastra and hailed from Taxila. He was well versed in the Vedas but was of an humble appearance. When, *once, he had gone to receive charity* instituted by the last Nanda king he was insulted and sent *away on account of his ugliness. He, then swore vengeance* on the house of the Nandas and worked ceaselessly to realize his object which he did with the help of Chandragupta.

✓**The Arthashastra:** The Arthashastra, as its name *suggests, is a treatise on the science of politics.* The treatment of the subject and its nature indicates a long formative tradition behind it and of which the book evidently is the culmination.

As we have it today the book is divided into fifteenn large sections and one hundred and eight sub-divisions. — After indicating the general lines on which a prince [illegible] *be educated and trained it describes in detail the* position of the government with all its attendant branches. Great attention is paid to all the implications of military strategy like the proper employment of espionage and schemes of attack and defence. The book gives an idea of the high and efficient development of the Maurya system of administration.

The Pali books tell us that Chandragupta came from a Kshatriya noble family of the Mauryas. The Greek authors say that he was of humble origin but do not call him base-born. The Puranas refer to the Nandas with feelings of scant courtesy but say nothing about his base birth. The Arthashastra ideal of a king as described by Chanakya is decidedly against a base-born monarch. It is only the commentator of the Puranic text who insinuates that Chandragupta was low born and the same is repeated by the drama Mudra Rakshasa. But all reliable evidence is not definitely in favour of dubbing him as base-born. The Mahaparinirvanasutra of the Digha Nikaya, one of the most ancient portions of the Pali canon, refers to the Mauryas as a Kshatriya clan. "It therefore practically certain" says Dr. Raychandhari, "that Chandragupta belonged to a Kshatriya community, viz., the Moriya (Maurya) clan."

Chandragupta must have usurped the throne in 322 B. C. For the next few years he was busy spreading his empire to the east and the west. In 304 B. C. he defeated Seleucos who made bold to try a raid into India but was unsuccessful. In exchange for 500 elephants Chandragupta added four satrapies of Aria, Archosia, Gedrosia and Paropanisadai i. e. Herat, Kandahar, Makran and Kabul to his dominions and thus secured for his empire that nature frontier for which India in future was to sigh in vain. Generally speaking by 320 B. C. he rid India of the Greeks and excepting the attempt by Seleucos he was not bothered by any more Greek adventures.

Chandragupta's empire included the tract called Madhyadesha and extended as far as Persia in the north-west, Kathiawar in the west and Bengal in the east. Tamil tradition gives some indication that his sway also extended in the south.

The administration of Mauryan India was highly developed and efficient. The king was the supreme head of the state and wielded, in theory, extensive autocratic powers though in practice his conduct was regulated by the laws of *Rajadharma*. For the convenience of administration the empire was divided into viceroyalties; that of north-western India with its capital at Taxila, of western India—capital Ujjain, and the south with the seat of government at Suvarnagiri. These viceroyalties were in the charge of the princes from the ruling family who were assisted by provincial and district officials.

City Administration: The responsibility for the administration of the city rested with a high minister called *Pauravyavaharika*. Then there was the municipal comission consisting of six boards with five members on each. These boards were as follows: (1) The board for industries which mainly dealt with subjects relating to the industrial arts. (2) This board was responsible for watching the foreigners and looking after their needs. (3) The third board was in charge of vital statistics. (4) The fourth was the board of regulating and supervising all commercial [illegible] and enforcing the use of properly stamped weights and measures. (5) This board supervised over the trade in manufactured articles. (6) The sixth board collected tithes on sales which amounted to one-tenth of the profit.

✓Finance being the mainstay of the government particular attention was paid to the collection of revenue. There was a special officer charged with the collection of revenue called *Samahrta* or the collector-general who was paid a salary of 24,000 *panas* per annum. He was responsible for the proper collection of duties from mines, forests, cattle, roads of traffic and land revenue. To assist him in this task he had many superintendents working under him.

✓We are told by Magasthenes, the Greek Ambassador at the court of Chandragupta, that irrigation was an object of due government attention. The officer in charge of irrigation had to "superintend the rivers, measure the land and inspect the sluices by which water is let out from the main canals into their branches."

Justice was administered by duly constituted courts working under the authority of the government. There were lower and higher courts and a case dealt with by the lower court, if found unsatisfactory to either party, was referred to the higher court. The judges were usually appointed by the king.

✓Military administration: The Maurya army was formidable and constituted a very efficient and ruthless striking force. As in the case of civil matters the administration of the army was very carefully designed. The king was the supreme commander and immediately under him was the commander-in-chief. There was a regular war office in charge of military administration. Then there was a commission of thirty members divided into six boards, each with five members. Each board was in the charge of an officer known as the *Adhyaksha*. The six boards were: (1) Navy—The admiral was in charge of naval administration and the fleet included both the river-borne and sea-borne armadas. (2) Board of transport commissariat and army service. (3) Board of Infantry. The normal equipment of a foot soldier was a bow and arrows besides he carried sword, spear and buckler. (4) Board of cavarly. The cavalry force numbered about 30,000 horses. (5) Board in charge of elephants. The Maurya army had a compliment of 9000 war elephants. Each elephant carried four men including the driver and (6) Board of war-chariots. Thus the total strength of the field force of the Mauryas would come to 1,50,000 men.

Megasthenes: The Greek envoy at the court of Chandragupta, Megasthenes, has left us a description of Maurya administration. His description of the city of Pataliputrs is especially of inestimable value. Pataliputra, according to him, was the largest city of the empire extending 9½ miles in length and 1¾ miles in breadth. It was surrounded by a ditch and a wall with 570 towers and 64 gates. The king had a gorgeous and majestic palace with extensive parks and specious courtyards. The king was always guarded by specially chosen female guards and appeared in public only on four occasions, in time of war, to sit in court as a judge, to offer sacrifice and to go on hunting expenditions.

According to Jain tradition Chandragupta, in his age, abdicated in favour of his son and became a monk. He seems to have died in Mysore. He ruled for 24 years from 323-2 to 299-8 B. C.

Bindusara: After Chandragupta's death in 299 B. C. his son Bindusara succeeded him to the throne. Compared to Chandragupta's reign of 24 years, full of noble deeds of conquest and empire building, Bindusara's reign of 25 years is almost a blank. He must have come to occupy the throne in 298-7 B. C. and ruled up to 273 B. C. Like his illustrious father, Bindusara maintained friendly contacts with the Hellenistic kings and we have a half humorous and half revealing episode which tells us that Bindusara—known to the Greeks as Amitraghata—requested Seleucos Nicator to send him sweet wine, figs, and a philosopher; the philosopher being politely refused as sophists were not on sale in Greece! It does not seem probable that he made any additions to the empire and the task of maintaining it intact in itself must have been an ardous one. According to Taranath, the Tibetan historian, however, he was a great soldier and conqueror and extended his empire to the south of India. Chanakya, the same authority tells us, continued to be his advisor and acting under the advice of the "Maurya Bismark" Bindusara extended his empire further into the East and the West. He had at his court a Greek envoy called Daimachos who evidently succeeded Megasthenes.

ASHOKA

If Chandragupta earned for the Maurya dynasty an empire, Ashoka gave it undying fame. The life of Ashoka is indeed unique in many respects and his place in the galaxy of famous emperors is high and almost unrivalled.

Early Life: *Ashoka succeeded his father Bindusara* in 272 B. C. The story of his early life like many an Indian monarch of antiquity is vague and indefinite in details for the stone and pillar inscriptions which speak so eloquently about his creed and actions are remarkably reticent with regard to his early life. And hence we have to do what we can and fashion out a connected narrative of his early years from often contradictory and stultified legends and tales obviously coloured by partisan interests.

The Divyavadana, a Sanskrit Buddhist work which belongs to the northern division of Buddhism, narrates a tradition that a Brahmana woman of Champa was doing the work of a barber for the Maurya king Bindusara who finally married her. She, *according to this source*, was the mother of Ashoka. According to the tradition preserved in the commentary on the Pali chronicle Mahavamsa Ashoka's mother was much under the influence of an Ajivika teachar called Janasana. If this be believed then it becomes much easier to explain as to why Ashoka continued to support other creeds like the Ajivika and the Jaina *even when he was* an ardent Buddhist. The Mahavamsa says that Ashoka had 101 brothers. Immediately after his father's death Ashoka put to death his 99 brothers and became the king of India. The name of Ashoka's mother, says the Mahabodhivamsa, was Dhamma while his brother was called *Tissa*. *In his* young days Ashoka was a viceroy of the province of Avanti and had his headquarters at Ujjayani. He married a Shakyan girl called Devi from whom he had a son named Mahendra and a daughter Samghamitra. His son and daughter later became Buddhists and were sent as missionaries to Ceylon for the propagation of [illegible] in that Island.

That Ashoka murdered all his brothers and waded through a sea of fraternal blood to the throne appears to be too fantastic and baseless for we find him referring to his brothers (though indirectly) in his inscriptions. The Ceylonese chronicles maintain that there was an interval of four years between Ashoka's accession to the throne and his coronation This interval has been a topic of controversy among scholars. But if the Ceylonese tradition be properly analysed it will be found that it has two parts which are not strictly related to each other. The first part is concerned about Ashoka's slaughtering his brothers which may be rejected outright as the account is evidently inspired with the desire of showing the contrast in character of Ashoka before and after his conversion to Buddhism. No such reason exists for the second part. Hence it can be accepted that some sort of disputed succession was involved and his coronation was delayed for some time.

His Queens and Sons: Ashoka in one of his inscriptions mentions Kuruvaki as the second queen. The Mahavamsa mentions two more, Devi ond Asandhimitra. Asandhimitra lived for thirty years and after her death Ashoka made Thisyarakshita his chief qeen. Kuruvaki was also known as Tivaramata. Besides these queens, he seemed to have had some purdah ladies in his palace as was customary with ancient Indian kings. He had at least four sons who were appointed viceroys of the outlying provinces.

down by Kautilya in his Arthashastra. The time-table was proportinately divided between hours of dicharging kingly duties, study and amusement. He kept a rich table and before he turned Buddhist many animals were slaughtered for the royal kitchen. He was particularly fond of peacock's flesh and this delicacy was continued to be served for some time even after he abolished others.

His Empire: The extent of Ashokas's empire was practically the same as that of Chandragupta's with the additional conquest of Kalinga which proved a turning point in his career. The locations of his edicts indicate the extent of his empire. Ashoka refers to his dominions as *wide and mentions people like the Cholas, Pandyas* and Keralas who enjoyed a state of semi-independence. In the west his empire extended to the Kathiawar peninsula and Sopara on the Bombay coast. The Mysore copy of his inscriptions shows that the empire may have included that part of south India and the N. W. boundary is suggested by the Shahabazgarhi inscriptions. Bengal was an integral part of the empire.

Ashoka's conception of kingship was of a paternal type, for he considered all men as his children. His huge empire was divided into provinces and over the important ones persons of royal blood, like the *Kumaras* were appointed as Viceroys. Four such Viceroys were appointed wtih headquarters at Takshashila Ujjayini, Tosali and Suvarnagiri. The King was in intimate contact with his people through the *Parishad* or the supreme Assembly. The Viceroys had under them district officers called *Mahamatras*, who, in turn, were assisted by subordinate officers like the *Pradeshikas*, *Yuktas* and *Rajukas*, The *Rajukas* were judicial officers with wide authority. The edicts refer to another class of officers who are called *Pulisas* or agents. Every city was administered by *Nagala viyolakas,* who may be equivalent to a commissioner and had judicial powers. The King was constantly kept informed by a body of men called *Pativedakas* The officers, especially of the higher cadre, were ordered to go on five yearly tours for the purposes of inspection. They had to see that the lower officials were not unduly harsh to the people and that the King's orders were followed in letter and spirit. Justice was administered on the basis of equality before law by the *Vyavaharikas.* The king on special days ordered the release of prisoners and he also gave certain special facilities to persons under trial.

Ecnomic Conditions : The pivot of economic life in India has always been agriculture. The bulk of the King's revenue came from taxes on land and its produce. But the other professions also were in a floushing condition and considerably supplemented the agrarian produce. Trade and commerce were in a very flourishing condition and were organized into guilds. The guilds had their own laws and trade disputes were often settled by guids and corporations. The alderman, whose office was often hereditary, was a leader of such guilds. The guilds were constitutionally recognized and had representation at the court. The price of mercantile goods was fixed by the government and all commercial transactions were under the constant supervision of a superintendent of commerce. He was specially instructed to show favour to all those who imported foreign merchandise and instances of foreigners importing articles of trade from [illegible] countries were very common. Ports like [illegible] nabhumi, Bharukaccha, Saurashtra and Alexandria are a matter of common reference. Places like Benares and Mathura were famous for silks and Nepal blankets were a special favourite with inland traders. Production and sale of hides and skins of deer and goats and hemp, flax and wool yarns were also widely practised. Magasthenes has drawn a very informative thumbnail-sketch of the custums and manners of the people. The Indians, he says, all live frugally. Theft is of very rare occurrence. They live happily and are simple in their manners. Their robes are worked in gold and ornamented with precious stones, and they have a high regard for beauty and avail themselves of every device to improve their looks. Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem.

The Social life of the people was mainly centred round the *Samajas* or occasions of festivity. Entertainment at such gatherings consisted of music, dancing, wrestling and other gymnastic feasts, like riding elephant and horse, lifting a standing man on one's shoulder or display of trained animals. Touring actors would give dramatic performances base on the lives and deeds of valour of ancient heroes. Before the promulgation of the orders for the suppression of all such festivities excepting those solely inspired by religious motives by Ashoka, liquor and gambling were a necessary adjunct to such fairs. A superintendent of liquor strictly regulated its sale. Gambling was generally done with dice and was also controlled by a Government Superintendent of gambling. He supervised over the use of proper dice and issued licences to gambling houses. All this changed with surprising rapidity on Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. Life was more strictly geared to spiritual ideals and liquor and gambling were subsequently banned.

Position of Women: During the Mauryan epoch Buddhism was gradually succeeding in exercising a liberal influence on the social life of the people. Buddhism, being a reformist movement was fundamentally against the Caste System and Caste as we know of it today was yet in the womb of the future. Buddhism was specially liberal in its attitude towards women and during the Mauryan times women enjoyed such freedom so as to render their subservience to the male sex almost nominal. The system of polygamy was widely prevalent but the position of women both at home and abroad was always characterised by dignity.

The reasons which led to the one and the only war in the career of Ashoka are not quite clear. It is not definitely known whether Kalinga, prior to Ashoka's reign, was part of the Maurya dominions. But the tone of the Kalinga edict would imply its rising in revolt which was ruthlessly suppressed by Ashoka. In moving and revealing terms Ashoka speaks of the terrible holocaust and carnage wrought in terms of captives maimed and dead on the battlefield Kalinga. But with the captives, Ashoka's aggressive ambitions were effectively pinioned once and for all, with the maimed ones his heart bled and with the dead a new king was born.

operated with the Samgha for the rapid spread of the Buddhist way of life.

Ashoka's Dharma: "The dharma promulgated by Ashoka", observes Dr. Rhys Davids, "was the *dharma* for laymen, as generally held in India, but in the form, and with the modifications adopted by the Buddhists". His religion—Law of piety would be a better rendering—is characterised by broadmindedness, toleration and a certain ecclecticism. It was morality and its translation into practice in terms of life. He believed in the other world and the *effect produced* by virtue and sin on life hereafter. He had no patience with *empty* rituals and low superstitions and exhorts his people to show "proper courtesy to slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintance, and relatives, to Brahmanas and Shramanas and abstention from killing animals". Summarised in his own words his law of morality would be briefly stated thus: Morality includes few sins, many *virtuous deeds*, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity.

Ashoka's conduct as an ideal Buddhist layman is *perfectly in keeping* with his claims. Soon after his conversion he visited the holy places of Buddhism and in his 26th regnal year enlarged the stupa of Konagamana, a previous Buddha. He was actively interested in the work of the Buddhist order of monks and nuns and was closely associated with the *ecclesiastical affairs* of the Buddhist community. He strove hard to preserve the unity of the Samgha and did not hesitate to use his imperial office for that purpose. He directed that the lay-worshippers *should* visit the Samgha on every fasting day and thus offer close co-operation in following and spreading the law of the Buddha.

Ministers of piety: But Ashoka was not content with the formal expression of his imperial opinion. In order to, see that the people properly followed his views and duly translated them into action he instituted a new class of officers of state known as the *Dharma Mahamatras*. It was the bounden duty of these officers of morality to supervise over the marol behaviour of his subjects. They were also concerned with the establishment of proper amity between the various sects then existent. These officers were ordered to see that the Buddhist Samgha was not threatened by schisms and all such tendencies were rigorously punished. Ashoka was reputed to be a grear donor and it must have devolved upon these ministers to see to the proper distribution of gifts to the various religious establishments. Ashoka also had trees planted on the roadside and wells dug at specific intervals. He established hospitals for men and animals and had medicinal herbs planted. All these acts he construed as acts of dharma and the morality officers must have been instructed to organise a proper maintenance of all such wells and hospitals.

Was Ashoka a Buddhist? "Ashoka was" says Dr. Mukerjee, "humanity's first teacher of universal morality and religion". It is generally presumed when speaking about Ashoka that he was a Buddhist but certain omissions of a strictly doctrinal nature like Nirvana and the four noble truths in his edicts have led some scholars into believing that the dharma preached and followed by Ashoka was not speciffically Buddhist. Prominent among these may be mentioned as Rev. Father Heras and following him Prof. Dikshitar. It must be clearly stated that Ashoka's Buddhism was what then had been understood as the religion of the Buddhist laity which was somewhat different from the code laid down for monks and nuns. In one of his edicts Ashoka has openly declared his faith in the three jewels of Buddhism. As befitting an ideal lay devotee he went on a pilgrimage to the holy places of Buddhism. His solicitude for the unity of the Samgha, his references to the Buddhist sacred texts, all these are unmistakable indications of his Buddhist faith. Though a Buddhist he was tolerant towards other faiths and openly and freely made donations to Brahmanas and ascetics, Buddhists and Ajivikas.

Missions of Ashoka : In keeping with his religious fervour and proselytising enthusiasm Ashoka despatched missions to countries and states outside the borders of India; to the Greek King Antiochus, Alexander and Magus, Cholas, Pandyas and Ceylon. What happened to these missions and how far they were successful we are not in a position to state but about the authenticity of these missions there can be no doubt. Probably they represented a combined expression of Ashoka's goodwill and attempt to spread his way of morality among the peoples concerned.

The name of Ashoka figures very prominently in the ecclesiastical annals of Pali Buddhism as the convener of the third council. In all, we are told, there were three councils and the last was held under Ashoka's patronage. These three councils held during the period immediately after the death of the Buddha to the time of Ashoka serve as important landmarks in the ecclesiastical history of the creed. Soon after the death of the founder, we are told, fissiperous tendencies in the Samgha began to manifest themselves. This necessitated the convention of an assembly of all the prominent disciples which was held at Rajagriha. This assembly, we are further told, recited and collated all the utterances but its authenticity is seriously questioned by scholar like Oldenberg. But there is nothing improbable in the Buddha's disciples meeting together and collating his teachings so as to guard themselves against spurious interpretations and interpolations. A hundred years after the first council at Rajagriha came off the second council at Vaishali. *The circumstances surrounding it were more turbulent* than the previous one. The Vajjin monks, it appears, promulgated the use of certain articles in a manner specifically forbidden by the Buddha. The senior monks remonstrated them but it was of no avail. The recalcitrant monks argued that their action was quite in keeping with the teaching of the master and in order to refute this contention the second council was called. It met at Vaishali and condemned the action on the part of the Vajjin monks. This council, like the first, is not unanimously accepted as historical. The third council, according to the Pali chronicle *Mahavamsa*, was held during the reign of Ashoka. The immediate reason for convening the council was, that tempted by the generous treatment accorded to the Samgha by Ashoka, many heretics entered the order and consequently it being impure the *Uposatha* (the fortnightly meeting) could not be held. Ashoka came to know about it and ordered that *Uposatha* be immediately held. A minister of his bungled the task and a number of monks were killed, at which the King was much perturbed.

After this event the Samgha was purged and under the presidentship of Moggaliputta Tissa, who is the author of the *Katha Vatthu* the third Assembly was held. This account is full of contradictions and absurdities. Ashoka in his edicts never once refers to such an assembly. But it is possible that such a council may have been held after Ashoka's death and by its very nature must have been a purely sectarian affair.

Buddhist Sects: The rise and growth of Buddhist sects with which the second council is associated must properly be attributed to the lacunae existing in the philosophical system of Gautama. We see, for instance, that Gautama resolutely refused to explain or describe adequately the conception of Nirvana as also what he meant by "soullessness', (*Anatman*). The earliest attempts at schism were made by his own cousin Devadatta during his very lifetime but were unsuccessful. It was at the council of Vaishali that the 18 schools first appear into the history of the faith. So long as the Buddha lived every point of dispute could be referred to him and his solution be regarded as final. But after his death, in the absence of any such final authority, the disputes led to schisms which crystallised into different sects. The regional localization of the units of the Samgha, the division of the work of preservation and transmission of the Buddhist texts, the grouping of disciples around noted elders are other contributory factors. As time went Buddhism was split up into two main sections, known as *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*. The difference between the two schools centre round the diverse important points like the personality of the Buddha, the Bodhisatva , and nature of final liberation. The *Hinayanists* or the followers of the southern school of Buddhism at present found in Ceylon, Burma and Siam follow the Pali Canon while the sacred texts of the *Mahayanists* or the northern Buddhists used Sanskrit as a medium of expression. The fourth council held under the patronage of Kanishka was mainly a *Mahayanist* council. But these sects could not have existed as such during Ashoka's time otherwise he would have surely referred to them. His schism edict on the other hand leads support to the belief that the schismatic tendencies already existed during his reign and soon after manifested themselves into the deverse Buddhist sects.

The reign of Ashoka marks the zenith of the glory and spread of Buddhism in India. Ashoka accepted what was at best a small struggling sect whose votaries were mostly to be found within the confines of Magadha. To this local sect he accorded his imperial patronage and infused it with his singleminded devotion. The effect was that Buddhism now became the perdominent creed of India. with Ashoka's messengers it spread into the remotest corners of India and even spread abroad. But its decline was as sudden as was its spread in India. Though it lingered on for a considerable time afterwards Buddhism, as a dynamic way of life had spent itself. Ater the death of Ashoka it slowly started receding from public favour and was finally abandoned in favour of Vaishnavism. What were the reasons for such decline of Buddhism in India? Was it inherent weakness? One must abswer No! Buddhisum, it must be emphasized, was as much of an ethical movement as a social revolution though some scholars following others in their intellectual hobbies would frown upon such an interpretation. When a revolutionary movement crystalises into a tradition it outlives its social utility. The Buddha thought of *life* in terms of movement while his church acted in the interest of the preservation of the ecclesiastical and dogmatic *status quo.* Imperial favour, again brought it into conflict with the parent creed, Brahmanism. The Buddhist church itself lost its unity of purpose in a multiplicity of theoretical interpretations. Imperial patronage gave the Buddhist church a certain sense of security and material security, if not infused by a spirit of dynamic evengelism breeds lassitude and degeneration. But it is wrong to say that Buddhism was expelled from India, it was absorbed.

Ashoka's Edicts: That we are able to write the life of Ashoka in such minute detail and certainty is entirely due to that remarkable *corpus* of inscriptions well-known as Rock and Pillar edicts. These edicts are his autobiography engraven on stone. Their matter is as unique as their manner. We have already examined the matter and now we shall see what their manner is like.

The first thing that strikes us about these edicts is the opening. As an example we shall quote the Fifth Rock Edict of Girnar: "King Devanampriya Priyadarshin speaks thus. It is difficult to perform virtuous deeds. He who starts performing virtuous deeds accomplishes something difficult. Now by me various virtuous deeds have been performed," and so goes on the King, Priyadashin or Ashoka. One who knows something about Darius the great is reminded of his inscriptions. Compare, for instance, the Behistum inscription of Darius: "Thus saith Darius the King: This is what was done by me after I became king." Though the import of the two sets of incriptions is different we cannot but be stuck by the similarity in format. Bearing in mind the existence of Persian power in the north-western portions of India a significant Persian influence on the court life of the Mauryas becomes more than a probability.

Secondly, consider the matter and the vehicle of expression. No other king in the history of India has ever thought of making use of such proclamations like the inscriptions as confessions of religious feelings. Inscriptions there are by far and many, complete and fragmentary, dated and undated, long and short, but they are, with the solitary exception of these confessions, proclamations of royal conquests like the Allahabad Pillar incription of Samudragupta or the Hathigupta inscription of Kharvela; or charters of grants like the Nasik cave inscriptions of the Satavahanas.

The third characteristic concerns only the pillar edicts. These pillars are not only important for the edicts inscribed on them but also for their artistic execution and significance, which latter point could best be discussed by surveying the Ashokan monuments as a whole and which are comprised of three distinct groups like (1)Pillars (2) caves and (3) stupas.

minidei and (j) Nigliva. These monoliths are of highly polished sandstone over thirty feet in height. The columns generally have a tapering appearance and the top is surmounted with a capital variously described as bell capital or inverted lotus. The capital supports the figure of an animal, either a lion or bullock. It projects on all sides of the shaft and the underside of the projecting portion is relieved with an ornament" and some design while the bell itself is decorated with conventional lotus petals. The animals display a vibrant spirit and possess a majesty all their own revealing the familiarity of the artist with objects of nature. The massive appearance of the shafts, their weight and locations undoubtedly represent "a triumph of engineering, architecture and sculpture". The meaning of the statement in inverted commas will be clear when it is remembered that the two pillars at present standing in Delhi originally came from the village of Topra in the Ambala district and Meerath from the North-Western provinces. The sultan Phirozshah Tughalk, when he saw the first determined to remove it to Delhi and a carriage with 42 wheels was used and thousands of men hauled at every rope and after great lauour and difficulty the pill r was raised on to the carriage. A strong rope was fastened to each wheel and two hundred men pulled at each rope. Thus a labour of thousands stretching over weeks enabled the Sultan to fulfil his resolve.

The Maurya Art, of which the Pillars are eloquent monuments, flourished under the patronizing care of a sovereign monarch like Ashoka. The Maurya court, it cannot be denied, was subject to considerable Perso-Hellenic influence and as such the close probability of the pillars being influenced by the same trend cannot be altogether ruled out as impossible. At the same time it must be remembered that these pillars reflect the majesty of the vision of one man, they reflect the intensity of his faith, the tone of his feeling and the grandeur of his empire. They show preoccupation with an ideas, that idea being the translation in stone of the serenity and majesty as associated with Buddha's life. They possess an unmistakable restraint resulting in a suggestive silence, a veritable embodiment of elemental vitality and purposeful life. Again it must be remembered that the vision and capabilities of the Indian artists were such as to completely metamorphose all foreign influence with the result that the product is completely Indian in appearance and spirit.

The earliest historical caves—the Barabar group—in India can be attributed to the 12th and the 19th regnal years of Ashoka. These caves are carved out of a solid piece of rock generally of granite. The frontage opens in a door with sloping jambs which ara evidently a copy of wooden prototypes. The Barabar group of caves situated in an isolated range of hills on the left bank of the Phalgu river in the Gaya district are a prominent example of early cave architecture. They are seven in number, of considerable dimensions and though differing in plan are all similar in character and evidently belong to the same age. Both internally and externally they are plain and though they are the "smallest and least ornamented of any to be found in India, it still must have required a strong religious impulse to induce men to excavate even caves 30 to 40 feet in length in the hard granite rock, and to polish their interiors to the extent and that some of them are finished and all probably were intended to have been."

According to Buddhist tradition Ashoka is reputed to have built 84000 stupas. The statement though exaggerated out of all proportion contains a grain of truth. Long before Ashoka came on the scene the stupa, itself a commemorative edifice of high antiquity, had already assumed a religious character and he no doubt built some stupas construing the act as a source of merit. We are told that the relics of the Buddha's body were distributed first after his death and the *second distribution* took place in Ashoka's reign. Over some relics he built stupas at *various places*. The Samchi stupa in the earliest stage can be attributed to Ashoka. *Likewise* the stupa at Sarnath can be attributed to him.

Ashoka had fairly long reign of more than 33 years. *but* we have no positive record of this after the 29th year. He succeeded to the Maurya throne in 274 B.C. was crowned in 278-79 B.C. and may have died in *Circa* 238 B.C. Of his last *days* we have no definite information but it is possible that he may have become a monk.

His Greatness: Summarising the achievements of Ashoka and his place in History, Mr. H. G. Wells says, "*Amidst* the tens and thousands of names of monachrs that crowd the columns of History, their *Majesties* and Graciousnesses and sereneties and Royal Highnesses and the like the name of Ashoka *shines* and shines almost alone a star. From the volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or

Charlemagne." He was a benevolent king who loved his subjects as a father would and ceaselessly worked for their benefit here and hereafter. Such was Ashoka a saint who built a monument of righteousness among empire building monarchs and potentates.

THE SUCCESSORS OF ASHOKA

After the death of Ashoka the history of ancient India again lapses back into a period of uncertainty and conjecture from which it emerged at the advent of Chandragupta. From the *Puranas* we get a list of as many as 10 Kings who succeeded each other. The *Vivyavadana* mentions six names and Taranatha three. It is almost hopelessly impossible to deduce any connected narrative or succession list from such bewildering and diverse accounts. Ashoka had at least four sons; Tivara, Kunala, Jaloka and Mahendra. According to the *Vivyavadan*, Kunala had gone blind due to the machinations of his step-mother so that it is not possible that he reigned at any time. Mahendra and probably Tivara-Tisya became monks. Jaloka did not rule any where except in Kashmir. The names of the successors of Ashoka included in all the recessions of the *Puranas* and the Sanskrit Buddhist works are as follows:

Dasharatha 232 B. C. (Known from the Barbar cave Inscription).

Samprati (*Divyavadana* and Jain sources).

Devadharman.

Shatadharman.

Brihadratha (186) (*Harshacharita*). The reigns of Dasharatha, Samprati and Brihadratha can be fairly ascertained as historical. For Dasharatha we have the epigraphic evidence from the Ajivika cave inscription. Samprati is spoken of by Jain sources as a convert to Janinism and Brihadratha figures as the last Maurya who was murdered by Pushyamitra Shunga. It may be accepted that the Maurya empire broke up after Samprati and some of the kings mentioned may have been rulers of territories independent of Pataliputra. But the extremely short periods for which the various Maurya Kings appear to have ruled according to the *Puranas*, indicate that the Mauryan house had already passed its zenith of glory and was on the decline and that territorial fragmentation had reduced the empire to a region strictly confined within the four corners of Magadha.

The causes responsible for the downfall of such an extensive and well knit empire are manifold and the problem has given rise to a very interesting controversy among scholars. M. M. Harprasad Shastri puts forward the following reasons (a) that Ashoka stopped animal sacrifices throughout his empire and thus offended the Brahmana group (b) he reduced the Brahmanas who were *Bhudevas* (gods on earth) into false gods. (c) the appointment of *Dharmamahamatras* interfered directly with the influence and prestige of the Brahmanas (d) his conception of *dandsamata* (equality before law) was a direct affront to the Brahmanas (e) the Brahmanas brought about a complete revulsion for the Mauryas.

According to Dr. Bhandarkar, Hindu civilization, in the time of Ashoka had attained a perfectly equipoised condition between the forces making for material progress and those conducive to spiritual culture. This equipoise was so disturbed by the unflagging zeal displayed by Ashoka that the material element of Hindu civilization was completely subordinated to the spiritual and it soon became unprogressive and decadent though not extinct. Ashoka adopted a "different foreign" policy which was another cause of decay, according to the same learned author. If he had but continued the policy of his predecessors and helped the centripetal forces ushered in by Bindusara his strong arm and administrative genius could have effectively consolidated the Magadha empire and ensued its political stability. But the substitution of *Shastravijaya* (victory of arms) by *Dharmavijaya* (victory of morality) was politically disastrous through spiritually glorious.

K. P. Jayaswal advocates a similar opinion. He says, "The accident of the presence on the throne, at a particular juncture in history, of a man who was designed by nature to fill the chair of an abbot, put back events not by centuries but by millenniums."

The most important reason is to be found in the constitution of the Mauryan Government. The Mauryan kingship was an autocracy superimposed upon a political unification of mutually discordant geographical units. So long as the central authority had sufficient power at its command to make its weight felt in every part of the dominions and to nip all forces of disintegration in the bud till then the empire could survive. Bult as soon as an element of weakness vitiated the centre the empire was bound to disintegrate. Raychoudhari very apty remarks, "the withdrawal of the strong arm of Piyadassi was perhaps the signal for the distengration of this mighty monarchy." The successors of Ashoka do not seem to have possessed that combination of power and tact to a high degree as was required to hold the empire together. The short reigns of the successors of Ashoka indicate that palace revolutions were much in vogue. And again it must have so happened that soon after Ashoka's death the outlying provinces like Kalinga which were maintained within the empire by force declared themselves independent. Thus the total area under the direct suzerainty of the Manyras must have so much shrivelled up in size as to limit itself to Magadha and some border territory.

Characteristic of the Age: The Mauryan Epoch was remarkable in many respects. During its heyday it beheld an empire of such sound unity which by its very magnitude must have appeared gigantic. Natural geographical barriers were broken down and cultural contacts with nations in the west brought in their wake many a valuable contribution in the spheres of trade, art and social ideas. Hindu society displayed the greatest amount of eeclecticism in assimilating many a foreign idea and enough elasticism to absorb many a foreigner in its mighty folds. The enormous architectural activities, the brisk commercial transactions and the general prosperity of the masses of people speak of a great liberal age.

VII

SHORT REIGNS AND PALACE REVOLUTIONS.

POLITICAL conditions in the 2nd and 1st centuries B. C. were very complicated. With the death of Ashoka was removed the strong central power, which alone, with its benevolent di[illegible] some semblance of an integral cohesion in the far flung dominions of the Mauryas and consequently the disintagrating parts fell away. The successors of Ashoka were too weak and powerless to maintain a strong centre against the crumbling of the Mauryan state and thus a way was paved for the rise of a new power.

The last of the imperial Mauryas was Brihadradha, a weak and powerless king, completely in the hands of his ministers. His commander-in-chief was one Pushyamitra Shunga, who like an adroit stage manager arranged an army-review to be inspected by the King at which his head was severed from the trunk by his general.

The general, who with his sword, assassinated the last Maurya also brought into power the Brahmanic revival epitomised in the laws of Manu and externally expressed in his two horse-sacrifices.

The origin of the Shunga Dynasty, to which Pushyamitra ostensibly belonged, is rather obscure. According to Panini the Shungas are the descendants of Bharadwaja and in all probability belonged to Ujjayini. The etmology of the word is doubtful but it means fig-tree. The family seems to have been well-known since ancient times and is mentioned in the *Sama Vedic Brahmanas* of the *Vamsha Brahmana*. They are also mentioned among prominent theological families and are stated to be the followers of *Krishna Yajurveda*. As to when the Shungas exchanged the sword for the ferule we are not in a position to state definitely. But certain it is that during the time of the decline of the Mauryas the Shungas were hereditary rulers of Vidisha. Pushyamitra, the general, and his sons must have grown very powerful and while nominally retaining allegiance to the Mauraga Sovereign, he and his sons managed to rule over different provinces and kingdoms subject to the empire. Thus Pushyamitra cleverly managed to gather power in his hands and by his last *coup de etat* become the sovereign of Magadha.

✓ Pushyamitra in all probability occupied the throne of Magadha in 188-7 B.C. He is stated to have ruled for 36 years and had a very eventful career, cramming in its long span the performance of two horse sacrifices, repulsion of a Greek invasion from the North and an invasion from Kalinga by Kharavela and an extensive persecution of Buddhism attendant on the Brahmanic revival symbolised by his rise to power.

When Pushyamitra usurped the Maurya throne he became the master of that empire, which, though it was in a state of disintegratian, still retained a good part of its former possessions. The core of the empire was formed by Amga and Magadha while the Jamuna was the northern boundry of the empire. In the west it extended to the river Narmada and in the east it included Bengal. The dominions boasted of famous cities like Pataliputra, Vidisha, Ayodhya, and Barhut. Besides, the empire also included Bihar and Tirhut, the modern provinces of Agra and Oudh and Mathura.

✓ One of the most important events in the reign of Pushyamitra was that of foreign invasions. The time and the directions show the political and internal conditions of the power ruling in India in 2nd century B. C. Doubtless there was a Greek invasion from the north-west for Patanjali (who lived in about the same age) in his *Mahabhashya* and Kalidasa in his *Malavikagnimitram* refer to it in unmistakable terms. But the discovery of a momentous inscription from the Hathigumpha cave has brought to light an almost unknown event in the reign of Pushyamitra Shunga. This inscription is none else than the famous epigraph of Kharavela, the Jain King of Kalinga.

The kingdom of Kalinga was well-known since the time of the Nandas. In his inscription Kharavela refers in such terms to the Nandas as to render it almost probable that the Nandas had extended their sway over Kalinga. We hear of Kalinga next from the 13th rock edict of Ashoka wherein he describes in most vivid terms as to how the battle for Kalinga produced a deep and everlasting effect on his mind and which proved a turning point in his career. From this description it may be inferred that Kalinga was not annexed to the Maurya dominions by Ashoka for the first time. Soon after the death of Ashoka Kalinga must have declared itself independent and in the 2nd century B. C. Kharavela, the King of Kalinga became so powerful as to threaten the very existence of Magadhan rule. He invaded Magadha with a large army, attacked Rajagriha, sacked Gorathagiri and, to use the picturesque phraseology of the epigraph, led his elephants to the Ganges, forcing the Magadhan ruler to bow down at his feet in the process. The epigraph minutely describes the early education of the King, his royal pomp and power and his Jainistic faith. After this event the history of Kalinga relapses into obscurity and oblivion.

The ostensible reason for the invasion of Magadha undertaken by Kharavela is not clear. He, perhaps, following the ancient Indian custom, felt that he was sufficiently powerful to hazard an offensive action against his traditional enemy the Magadhan ruler with *certain success*. Whatever the reason, Kharavela mustered a sufficiently large force and broke into Magadhan territory just at the time when a threat of a Greek death-grip was looming on the borders of Magadha. The Magadhan forces appear to have been swept away before the invading army and Kharavela beseiged Rajagriha and sacked the hill fortress of Gorathagiri. The invasion, though of a formidable nature does not seem to have produced any lasting effect. Kharavela, however, returned to Kalinga with his much valued trophies in the form of some Jain images.

That there was a Greek invasion during the reign of Pushyamitra Shunga is certain but as to who the invader was is a topic of much controversy and two names of Demetrios and Menander are asserted with much force and feasibility. Numismatic evidence, though by its very nature being corroborative, if treated as primary or conclusive, can give rise to strange interpretations. Dr. Tarn has suggested that Demetrios and Menander were contemporaries and that the latter was a general of the former. The Greeks marched through the Punjab and their forces rolled on to Madhymika and Saketa. It is not definately known whether they ever occupied Patliputra or if they did how long did the occupation last. According to the information given in Kalidasa's drama *Malavikagnimitram*, Pushyamitra's grandson Vasumitra who was in charge of the sacrificial horse encountered a force of eek cavalry on the Jamuna and routed it. Kharavela's bold invasion must have acted as a lever in lifting the threatened Greek strangle-hold and very soon, thanks to internal difficulties like revolt in home provinces, the Greeks left Mathura and retreated into the further distances of the Punjab.

Kalidasa tells us about an *Ashvamedha* performed by Pushyamitra Shunga. It was generally supposed that this was the only one performed by the Shunga King. But an inscription from Ayodhya refers to him as having performed not one but two horse sacrifices.

The *Ashvamedha* or the horse sacrifice was well-known since Vedic times. It is almost invariably celebrated by a king who wants to prove his claim to lord paramountcy. Its performance involved the assertion of supreme power and a show of political authority not likely to be challenged or if challenged capable of quick and effective establishment. The horse which is finally immolated must be of black and white colour and is set free to wander about unhindered for a year. A prince is generally sent in charge of the horse, whose bounden duty it is to repulse all attempts at restriction of the horse's movements.

Chronology: A definite chronological sequence for this period is still an open question but the following scheme appears probable :—

Accession—188 B. C.
Battle of Gorathagiri—retreat of Demetrios
1st *Ashvamedha*—175 B. C.
Invasion of Kharvela—173 B. C.
Second *Ashvamedha*—169-52 B. C.
Death—152 B. C.

The Brahmanical reaction which set in shortly after the death of Ashoka was brought to culmination and fruition by the rise of Pushyamitra. The dynastic revolution was not only political but also had wide-spread social repercussions. The Kshatriya-Brahmana struggle was finally given the quietus and the Brahmanas as a class came to *the forefront.* The rise of a Brahmana political power consequently resulted in a widespread persecution of the Buddhists as a religious group. Buddhism was dealt a death blow which it could hardly survive.

AGNIMITRA SHUNGA

The successor of Pushyamitra Shunga was his son Agnimitra who, before his succession, ruled at Vidisha. The *Puranas* allot eight years to him. If we accept 152 B. C. as the date of Pushyamitra's death then 152-1 B. C. may be taken as the date of Agnimitra's accession to the imperial throne of Magadha. Before this time he evidently ruled as a Viceroy to his father over Vidisha, Panchala and Koshala. The capital of the area under Agnimitra's administration was the city of Vidisha. The river Narmada formed the southern boundary of the Kingdom. Like Pushyamitra, Agnimitra's career was not turbulent and excepting a petty local war and an amorous intrigue not much information of a really definite and historical character is forthcoming.

Malavikagnimitra: Whatever may be the period during which Kalidasa lived and wrote his immortal works his story of Agnimitra and his love-intrigue shows intimate knowledge of conditions prevailing during the time when Agnimitra lived and loved. The hereoine Malavika is a Vidarbha princess, who due to repeated misfortunes has to escape and find shelter in Vidisha in the palace of Agnimitra's queen Dharini who has her trained in the art of dancing. The king falls in love with her and after steering through some obstacles eventually marries her.

Agnimitra's war with the Vidarbha prince must have been only of a minor and local importance for no other reference to it is seen elsewhere. The territorial division or readjusment may, likewise, not have produced any widespread results. The position of Vidarbha seems to be of an inferior feudatory state, owing allegiance to the suzerainty of the Shungas. The dramatist has described Agnimitra as of a tolerant disposition.

Samchi and Barhut: The stupas of Samchi and Barhut which were developed "during the reign of the Shungas" provide by far and large, the most valuable source of information on the internal history of the period. The Barhut stupa is situated at Bhilsa on the northern border of Bhopal and the one at Sanchi at a distance of 5½ miles from it. Each monument consists of a hemispherical stupa with railing all round it and with four gates facing the four directions. The monuments had varied and slow growths and each generation seems to have painfully striven to add something of its own to them. Of more artistic interest than the stupa itself are the stone railings which are profusely carved over with scenes from the life of the Buddha and various *jataka* stories. These specimens in contra-distinction to Maurya Art show an entirely different artistic tendency. They display such a diversity of detail, a fineness of artistic ingenuity and imagination that we are at once informed that a totally different spirit is inspiring this art. The constant preoccupation of the artist with the four emblems signifying the life of the Buddha indicates that Buddha had by now almost been canonized. Another characteristic of this art is that it was the art of the people and thrived more on indigenous tradition. It is divested of all rigidity and immobility and attended by a spirit of serenity and is thoroughly capable of visualizing a diversity of mutually antagonistic elements and reducing them with the sweep of artistic imagination into a synthesized whole. It is fully capable of transcending the narrow limitations of relief and bulge into a vastness of compass; consider for example the narration of *jataka* stories in stone. A single picture like the one depicting Anathapindika constructing the Jetavana Vihara for the Buddha, encompasses within its frame a number of incidents which go to make up a connected story being told with the sheer force of a suggestive use of selected material. Consider again the story of Vessantara carved on the front of the Northern gateway at Sanchi. Marshall describes it as "one of Sanchi's masterpieces". The long story showing the life of Vessantara and the sumpreme sacrifices he made by way of charitable actions is enlivened with the dynamic force of artistic vision and purposeful sincerity. With these monuments the indigenous art of India had finally come of age.

✓These sculptures are not only examples of artistic beauty, they are also source books of information relating to the mode of life of the people, their dress and jewelry, their vehicles and towns, their soldiers and hermits and their customs and manners. Consider the aspect of dress. No single book could have described the sartorial fashions of the people as vividly as these representations. The carvings generally show male figures dressed in a sort of a *dhoti* reaching just below the knees, with an upper robe thrown over the shoulders. In the case of female figures the *dhoties* reach down to the ankles. The *dhoties* are secured round the waist with a girdle and sash tied in a slip-knot in the front below the navel; either with the free ends floating down one side or with the two ends or two sides, right and left. Tunics, which might have resembled the modern *Kurta* were also sometimes worn by both men and women. The most important part of the dress, however, was the turban. Many styles of wearing these turbans seems to have been popular.

But it is in the matter of jewelry that the artistic taste of the people is seen at its best. The hair, in the case of women, was decorated with fringes of pearls or other beads according to the status of the person. The dressed up hair ended in tassels which were sometimes decorated with gold caps studed with pearls and gems. From the fringes of pearls worn over the hair hung a pendant touching the centre of the forehead. The ears sported earnings. The neck was adorned with necklaces of two, three or six strands. The arms had armlets and the wrists were heavy with bangles showing a bead-like structure or with a structure made up of rectangular blocks or slabs. Over the waistline hung girdles of diverse designs and breadth. The fingers and in some cases even the thumb glittered with rings. Wearing anklets, simple and ornamented, also seems to have been a common practice. These ornaments were generally made of gold or silver which was used as the base over which delicate designs sets with precious stones were executed.

The sculptures which invariably have dedicatory or explanatory inscriptional lables point to the full development of the Pali language and literature. Words like a learner of *Dhamma*, of the *Nikayas* or the *Pitakas* signify that the Pali canon had almost emerged in a final form and hence a discussion on the language and the extent of literature would not be out of place here.

The problem of the basis and original home of Pal has proved to be a most fruitful topic of speculation among scholars both in India and the west As many as 17 different opinions are put forth by scholars like Drs. Rhys Davids, Geiger, Grierson, Keith Wallesar, B. C. Law, Bannerji, Shastri and others and locales from taxila in the north-west to Kalinga in the South are proposed as the original home. The language shows a general softening of the sounds of the Sanskrit language (e. g. *Putra* (son) in Saskrit is *Putta* in Pali). Of all the Prakrists it bears the closest resemblance to Sanskrit and it is generally acceptable that in its early form it must have been a sort of *a lingua franca* of Magadha. In its present form it is pre-eminently a literary language and as such bears signs of artificial pruning and modifications.

The canonical literature of the Southern Buddhist, which must have existed in a more or less finalised form in this age is comprised mainly of the three *Pitakas* (or baskets). These three "baskets" or collections of texts are (1) *Vinaya* (rules of discipline of the Buddhist order of monks and nuns), (2) *Sutta* (collection of discourses concerning the ethical principles of the Buddha's creed) and (3) *Abhidhamma* (a collection of seven texts bearing on the philosophy [especially metaphysics] of Buddhism.) From the sociological and cultural points of view the second division of which, the collection of the *jataka* tales and *Dhammapada* form a part, is more important. All these "texts" were no doubt a product of a considerable period of literary activity and reflect varying conditions of social life.

Probobly to the same age can be ascribed the "fixation" of the laws of Manu and the Brahmanisation of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The laws of Manu inform us that the classes of bye-gone days had now hardened into castes. The Kshatriya as a class had lost his position of priority and the Brahmana had finally emerged as the most impotrant caste in Hindu society. Buddhism was now on the decline and with it whatever liberalizing influence it had wielded on the social structure was fast disappearing. The Shudra, who under the gentle and liberal influence of Buddhism was gradually getting rid of his disabilities was fixed in the lowest division of Hindu society and his lot was to go on worsening ever more. On the other hand *foreingn elements like* the Yavanas and Shakas were being assimilated in and *their places fixed into* the general framework of Hindu Society. Vishnavism was solwly emerging as an organised sect with numerous votaries including distinguished foreigners like Heliodorous, the envoy from the Court of Antalkidas, among them. Such then was the general picture of life in this age of *short reigns* and palace revolutions.

THE LATER SHUNGAS

The political history of India after the time of Agnimitra lapses back again into 'that' mysterious obscurity which is a characteristic of the story of Ancient India. This darkness is enlivened only by *the flashes of* names of kings preserved in the *Puranic* lists. The *Purands* mention the *following* Shunga Kings:-Vasujestha (7 years, 114-137 B. C.); Visumitra (10 years, 137-127 B. C.); Andhraka (2 years, 127-125 B. C.); Pulindanka (3 years, 125-122 B. C.); Ghosha, (3 years 122-119 B. C.); *119-110 B. C.*); Bhagavata 32 years, 110-78 B. C.); Devabhumi (10 years, 78-68 B. C.).

Kalidasa in his Agnimitra-drama mentions Vasamitra *as the* grandson of Pushyamita Shunga. Kalidasa either does not know of Vasujestha or has no occasion to mention his name. Almost all the *Puranas* are unanimous in mentioning Vasujestha as the third king *of the* Shunga dynasty. It does not seem probable that the relationship between him and *Vasumitra was that of a* father and son. It is more likely that Vasujestha and Vasumitra were *brothers* and that Vasujestha dying childhless was succeeded by his younger brother

Vasumitra. Nothing besides his name and the number of years he ruled is known about Vasujestha.

Regarding Vasumitra we know from Kalidasa that he was a good archer and was in charge of guarding the sacrificial horse for Pushyamita's *Ashvamedha.* Bana in his *Harshacharita* tell us of a Sumitra, son of Agnimitra who being overfond of drama, was attacked by Mitradeve in the midst of actors and was murdered. As to who this Mitradeva was we do not know.

The next Shunga king about whom some reliable infomation is available is Bhagavata know or as Bhagabhadra in the Besnagar pillar inscription. From this inscription it appears that the Sunga Kings had diplomatic relations with contemporary Greek Kings. Heliodrous, who built the Garuda Pillar was a diplomatic envoy from Antalkidas to the Shunga court and was a Vishnava by faith. Vaishnavism had by now, fully emerged into an organised sect with a numerous following and even foreigners became devotees. Bhagabhadra had a long and peaceful reign of 32 years.

Devabhumi, the last of the Shungas, who ruled for ten years seems to have suffered the same fate as was meted out to the last Maurya, by the founder of the Shunga dynasty. Bana says in his *Harshacharita*, "In a frenzy of passion the over libidous Shunga was at the instance of his minister Vasudeva reft of life by a daughter of Devabhuti's slave woman disguised as his queen." Thus was brought about the end of a dynasty which held the throne of Magadha for [illegible] years.

THE KANVAS

The minister who brought about the last Shunga's death himself became the founder of the Kanvayna—also called the servants of the Shungas (*Shungabhritya*) dynasty which ruled over what was left of the Magadhan empire for 45 years.

The Kanvas were a well-known Brahmana clan, the name itself being the name of an ancient rishi repeatedly referred to in the *Rigveda*. The Kanva family was connected with the Atri family but had no claim to divine origin and must have been *Yajamanas*. The Kings of the dynasty are Vasudeva (67 to 58 B. C.), Bhumimitra (58 to 44 B. C.), Narayana (44 to 32 B. C.) and Susharman (32 to 22 b. C.). It is possible that Mitradeva who slew Vasumitra Shunga may have been an ancestor of Vasudeva Kanvayana.

Nothing more than names of these kings is known. It is evident that being Brahmans they must have helped the Brahmanic revival and most probably the brahmanisation of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* was further carried on in this period.

The political picture of the times, as far as can be judged from the scanty material at our disposal, appears to be one of decadence and disintegration. The Shungas started as a military power and in course of time became puppets in the hands of their Brahmana Ministers. Pushyamitra may have to a certain extent checked the tendencies of disintegration of the feudatory territories from the imperial fold but had to face an invasion from the south and another from the north. By the time Agnimitra came to the throne, the Shunga military power was very much weakened and consequently the territorial proportions of their kingdom must have diminished in course of time. The large number of coins from that period show that many of the feudatory kings and republics declared themselves independent and were issuing coins in their own name.

The large number of coins which can be safely ascribed to this period tells us of many small kingdoms which existed for all practical purposes, independent of the central power. Such kingdoms were Panchala (capital Ahicchatra) Kaushambi the Yaudheya kingdom, Barhut, the kingdom of the Arjunayanas and Maharaja Janapada.

In the 1st century B. C. the Shakas and the Andhras inundated the Gangetic plain and swamped out of existence whatever remained of the central Maurya power though Hiuen Tsiang says that the descendants of the Mauryas lived upto the 7th century A. D. They may have lived as petty rajas, administering an insignificant territory. But Magadha as a sovereign power *was* was already extinct.

VIII

NEW PEOPLES AND NEW KINGDOMS

THE year 188-7 B. C. saw the end of the Maurya Imperial Sovereignty. For the next 115 years ruled the Shungas and the Kanvas in succession in Magadha. But long before the rise of the Kanvas and immediately after the death of Ashoka, the decline of Maurya power gave a chance to one Simuka—evidently in the employ of the Mauryas—to declare pendent in Western Dekkan and found the Satavahana dynasty. The absence of a strong central power necessarily resulted in the establishment of new kingdoms either by indigenous rulers or foreigners. The story of the 250 years before the rise of the imperial Guptas, hence, is essentially the story of these new peoples and new kingdoms like the Satavahanas, the Indo-Greeks, the Shakas, the Kushanas and the Vakatakas. ✓

We are told by the *Puranas* that the last Kanva was assassinated by a member of the Satavahana dynasty. But before a Satavahana King could infiltrate into the central areas and murder the last Kanya he must have had sufficient imperial power and tradition behind him. It was observed before that soon after the death of Ashoka, the Mauryan empire showed symptoms of violent disintegration. The different feudatory princes and officers of state, charged with the administration of vast territories, threw off the yoke of loyalty to the imperial house and to all intents and purposes ruled as independent kings. One such noble or an officer in the employ of the Mauryas must have been the first Satavahana, who made a bold bid for power and established his own independendent kingdom in the Deccan—a kingdom, which during its passage of time was to see as many as 30 kings live and work for an aggregate of 442½ years.

✓The origin and the meaning of the name Sathvahana are obscure. Various fanciful interpretations offered but such interpretations represent a mixture attempt at glorification with a dash of quasi-historical anecdotes. The *Puranas* invariably refer to them as Andhra Kings but this can be easily explained. It is possible, nay very probable, that the *Puranas* came to be compiled at a time when the rule of Satavahanas was necessarily restricted to Andhradesha and recent investigations have revealed that in the beginning at least the "centre of gravity of the early Satavahana power lay in the western Deccan" and that "all the circumstances point to western India as the original home of the Satavahanas". Their caste, relying on epigraphic evidence, could be taken as Brahmana but a divergent view is also put forward. "The Satavahanas", says Dr. Gopalachary, "were Kshatriyas and bore the *gotras* of their mothers. They got this institution of tracing descent by mothers through inter-marriages with Kshatriya families in certain localities. The system was one for the regulation of marriages and not for descent of property."

The *Purana* list gives us names of 30 Satavahana kings whose combined rule spread over 442½ years. Many of the kings are just but names to us and from among this galaxy only a few kings stand out shedding a revealing light on the dark periods that interstice the pattern of Satavahana history.

The founder of the Satavahana dynasty was Simuka who, according to the *Puranas* ruled for 23 years (220 B. C. to 197 B. C.). He must have been a noble or an officer in the service of the Mauryas in the western Deccan and soon after Ashoka's death must have established his independent kingdom. A Jain legend tells us that the first Satavahana king built Jain temples and *chaityas* but in his old age become wicked and was suubsequently dethroned and killed.

Simuka was succeeded by his brother Krishna I, who ruled for 18 years. His reign saw the expansion of the kingdom as far as Nasik. The administration was modelled on Mauryan lines and we have an inscription in the Nasik cave by his *Mahamatra* who was in charge of the *Shramanas*.

Shri Satakarni I (197 B. C. to 169 B. C.) who succeeded Krishna I, is supposed to be a contemporary of Pushyamitra Shunga. The long record at Naneghat which contains the "funeral oration" of his disconsolate wife Nayanika, daughter of Maharathi Taranakayiro mentions the sacrifices performed by this king which indicate his imperial positon. These sacrifices which included *Ashvamedha* must have been performed in commemoration of the expansion of his empire which now spread into the central provinces and which annoyed Kharavela the king of Kalinga. Kharavela sent an army to chastise the bold Satavahana but it does not seem probable that he was actually defeated.

The next important king is Hala who ushered in an era of considerable literary activity in Prakrit. He is mentioned by name in the *Saptashatakam*, and the *Lilavati*. The Satavahanas used Prakrit as their official language as can be readily seen from their inscrip tions but the association of Hala's name with the *Saptasataka* would indicate that he encouraged the use of Prakrit for literary purposes also.

The *Saptashataka* is a compilation of 700 verses in 7 chapters and of an erotic nature. The meter used in Arya and the language Maharashtri Prakrit. Hala is reputed to be its author but it is more than probable that many poets must have collaborated in the work.

"The prevailing tone is gentle and pleasing, simple love set among simple scenes, fostered by the seasons ......The maiden begs the noon to touch her with the rays which have touched her beloved; she begs night to stay for ever, since the moon is to see her beloved's departure. The lover in turn bids the thunder and lightening to do their worst on him, if they but spare her whom he loves." Such is the theme and tenderness of a mellowed love, the pathos of separation and the joy of reunion are some of the dominant notes which lend exquisite charm to the collection.

The *Lilavati* describes the military exploits in Ceylon of Hala's commander-in-chief Vijayananda. "The king of the Sinhala Dwipa by name Sitamegha had a daughter by name Lilavati by his Gandharva wife Sarasri. She lived near Sapta Godavari Bhumam which is identified with modern Draksharanya. After his military exploits Vijayananda camped with his troops at Sapta Godavari Bhumam and came to learn all about Lilavati. After his return to the capital, he narrates the whole story to his king who then proceeds to the place, kills a demon Bhishanana and marries Lilavati."

Between Hala (No. 17) and Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni there is a period of incessant aggressive activity on the part of some foreign tribes who had formed settlements and kingdoms in western India and who made repeated attempts at eastward expansion at the cost of the Satavahanas. They are described as Ksharatas but it is not certain whether they were politically or ethnologically related to the Shakas.

Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni: Gautamiputra Shri Satakarni is described in an inscription in a Nasik cave as the destroyer of the Shakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas and the exterminator of the Ksharatas. The Ksharatas had established their power in Malva and Western India and it was Gautamiputra who repaired the considerable losses to the family fortune by wresting these dominions from their hands. His empire included Northern Maharashtra, Eastern Rajputana, East and West Malwa, Saurashtra, a part of modern Berar and Northern Konkan.

Gautamiputra Shri Yadnya Satakarni: Yadnya Satakarni is the last important monarch of the line of the Satavahanas. He has left many inscriptions for us at Kanheri, Nasik, and Ganjam which clearly suggest that he not only succeeded in maintaining the eastern possessions but also added Aparanta and North Maharashtra to his dominions.

THE INDO-GREEK KINGS

Just as the decline of the Mauryas after the death of Ashoka gave a chance to Simuka to declare himself independent in the Western part of the Deccan, the void so created in the North-west attracted a number of foreigners who built kingdoms on Indian soil which lasted for some centuries but produced hardly any lasting effect. The Greeks known as the *Yavana* to Indians had been lurking on the frontiers of India since Alexander's grand invasions the effects of which were obliterated as swiftly as they were impressed. The second attempt was made by Bactrian princes of the house of Euthydemus in 200 B. C. and the third was that of Eucratides, who had supplanted the family of Euthydemus and occupied all its possessions in the North-Western portion of India before 162 B. C.

Demetrios and Menander: The Greek invasion led by Demetrios followed the main lines used by the armies of Alexander the Great. According to the information given to us by the Strabo, the Bacterian kings carried their conquests to the south over the Hindukush into south Afganistan, the N. W. F. Province, Punjab, Sind and Kathiawar. The invasion proceeded along two main routes, one beyond the Beas eastwards and the other beyond the Indus delta southwards. The Vanguard which seems to have penetrated Madhyadesha and roled on to Mathura, had to turn back due to political trouble in the home provinces. The invasion, however, does not seem to have produced any lasting political results in India proper.

Menander is the best known of all the Yavana rulers in India. He is the central figure of the Pali book *Milinda Panha* or the questions of King Milinda which gives reports of conversation between the learned Buddhists monk called Nagasena and King Milinda who is finally converted to Buddhism. His capital was Shakala and his fame as a great and just ruler had spread outside the boundaries of India.

subjugated Arcosia and another led by the Shaka Maues conquered Taxila in about 85 B. C. and put an end to the Greek power in that region.

This Maues was a powerful king and his kingdom included Chakusha near Taxila over which ruled one of his satraps. His coins are found *mostly in the Punjab* where he is called Moga but his away extended over Gandhara and his reign could be placed approximatly between 33 B. C. and the middle of Ist cent. A. D.

Maues was succeeded by Azes I who was the Viceroy of Arcocia and Seistan. Azes I enjoyed a long reign extending over 40 years during which time he annexed the kingdom of Hippostratos and put an end to Greek rule in Eastern Punjab.

Of special interest is Gondophares, the Phalava king, with whom the tradition of St. Thomas, the Apostle of the Parthians is associated. The *Acts of St. Thomas* refers to Gondophares as King of India. His power, at first, seems to have been restricted *to southern Afganistan* but later on he extended his sway over the Gandhara region with the annexation of the Peshawar district in the 26th year of his reign.

The system of Satrapies was peculiarly a Persian institution. "The *satrap in Persia* was the head of the administration in his province; he collected the taxes, *controlled the local* officials, the subject tribes and cities and was the supreme judge of the province to whose chair every civil and criminal case could be brought. He was assisted and was controlled by a royal secretary and by emissaries of the king."

on Brahmanas and Buddhists alike and "ferries, rest-houses, places for drinking water and public halls are some of the comforts that he bestowed on his subjects. What redounds greatly to his credit is his revival of the *Nigama Sabha*. There was also a Registry office where all important documents were registered after being read out." During his reign the country enjoyed peace and prosperity of which many benefactions and glorious monuments bear eloquent testimony. The rule of the Kshatrapas lasted from 25-20 B. C. to 78 A. D.

"The greatest rivals of the restored Satavahana empire were at first the Shaka *Kshatrapas* at Ujjain" says Prof. Raychoudhari. And to Ujjayini belonged Chashtana who ascended the throne in A. D. 78 and is described as the founder of the Shaka era which does not seem probable. According to the Andhau inscrpition Chashtana was ruling conjointly with his grandson Rudradaman in the year 130 A. D.

Rudradaman, who says in his Junagadh inscription that "he was chosen by men of all castes as their protector" and won for himself the title *Mahakshatrapa* became independent sometime between 130 to 150 A. D. It appears that his power was menaced by some enemy and had to stabilize it with his own prowess. His sway extended over east and west Malwa, the Mahishmati region, the territory around Dwarka, Saurashtra, Marwar, Cutch, the lower Indus Valley, a part of western and central India and Northern Konkan. The Junagadh inscription says that he twice crossed swords with Satakarni and defeated him but did not destroy him. In the opinion of Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar this Satakarni was karni was married to Rudradaman's daughter. Rudradaman also conquered the Yaudheyas. He ruled from Ujjayini and was a liberal and learned king well-versed in grammar, polity, music and logic. He had at least two sons and one daughter who was married to Vashishtiputra Satakarni. It was during his time that the Sudarshana embankment was repaired at a great cost to his treasury.

The power of the *Kshatrapas* which lingered on for sometime after Rudradaman was finally destroyed by the Guptas.

THE KUSHANAS

The Kushanas, we are told by Chinese historians, were a section of the Yueh-chi race who in about 165 B.C. were living in the mountainous regions of Chinese Turkestan. There they were defeated by the Hiung-Nu who also killed their king. Then, under the leadership of the widow of their slain king the Yueh-chi migrated westward and in the course of their migration attacked the Wu-Sun killing their king. After this event the Yueh-Chi fought the Shakas in the plains of Jaxartes (the Syr-Darya) and forced the Shaka king to seek refuse in Kipin (Gandhara). But in the meanwhile the son of the king of the Wu-Sun who was killed by Yueh-chi attacked them and drove them further westward where they established their suzerainty over the weak and disorganized Ta-hia. Fan-Ye in his annals of the later Han Dynasty supplies more information about these Yueh-chi. He says that while in Ta-hia the Yueh-chi were devided into five groups of which the Kushanas were one.

A hundred years later the Kushanas over-powered the four other groups and the Kushana leader called

Kieon-Tsioon-K'io and who is identified with Kadphises I declared himself as the King, invaded Parthia and occupied Kabul. He seems to have lived to the ripe age of 80. He assumed the titles of Yaung (chief). Maharaja, Rajadhiraja and *sacadhramatic* which suggests that he was a devout Buddhist.

Kadphises I, was succeeded by his son Kadphises II, the Vima, Wima or Wema. He extended the Kushana power further into the interior of India by completing the conquest of Northern India. The date of Wema-Kadphises' succession is given by Smith as A. D. 77 or 78. His power extended as far as the Gangetic plain *(Benares). His territories were administered by military* viceroys. His reign seems to have lasted for 32 years from 78 to 110 A D.

Chinese Interlude: In the third quarter *of the first* century A. D. the Chinese power under the bold leadership of a general called *Pan Chao* was steadily on the increase and spreading westwards as far as the very cofines of the Roman empire. This could not be looked on in silence by Wema who considered himself as an equal of the emperor and by way of boldly asserting his status of equality demanded a Chinese princess *in marriage*. The Chinese general construed this as an insult to his emperor and expelled Wema's *envoy* from his territory. Then Wema collected a strong force of 1,70,000 cavalry commanded by his Viceroy Si and dispatched it to attack the Chinese. But the hardships on the way so weakened the Kushana army that when it emerged into the plains it fell an easy pray to Pan Chao and was defeated. Wema was, then, forced to pay tribute to the Chinese.

"The chronology of this period," says Rapson, "has been one of the most perplexing problems in the whole of Indian History, and the problem can scarcely be said to be solved positively even now; that is to say, it has not yet been placed beyond all possibility of doubt." Be it as it may, we can safely assume with Vincent Smith that Wema-Kadphises was directly succeeded by Kanishka the most illustrious and the best known of Kushana rulers.

✓Kanishka completed the Kushana conquest of upper India and his sway extended all over North-Western India, probably as far south as the Vindhyas, as well as over the remote regions beyond the Pamir Passes. It is also probable that he weilded authority over western India through the Shaka *Kshatrapas* and he is credited with having built the city of Kanishkapur in Kashmir. His capital was at Peshawar where in his later days he became a devout Buddhist and erected a great relic tower which must have been regarded as one of the wonders of the world. Its superstructure of carved wood rose to thirteen stories, to a height of at least 400 feet and was surmounted by a mighty iron piramate. He also built a magnificent monastery near it which was existing as late as the 9th century A. D.

Kanishka is said to have waged a war against Parthia being provoked into it by the Parthian king who is described as "very stupid and with a violent temper." Kanishka also avenged the defeat suffered by his predecessor at the hands of the Chinese by defeating them and compelling them to send hostages who however, were treated with dignity and consideration due to their status. As a result of these exploits his

As a result of the Kushana conquest commerce between the Roman empire and India received a considerable impetus and Roman gold began to pour into India in exchange for Indian silk, spices and gems.

The reign of Kanishka lasted for some forty years and was succeeded by that of Vashishka about whom very little is known. Vashiska was followed by Huvishka who styled himself as "steadfast in the law", was a patron of Buddhism and built a monastery at Mathura. He is also said to have built the town of Hushkapur in Kashmir.

The last of the great Kushanas was Vasudeva I, who was a Shaiva. He seems to have lost his hold over north-western portions of the Kushana dominions for his inscriptions are only to be found in the Mathura region.

The age of the great Kushanas was an age characterised by intence literary and religious activity for it was in this age that famous authors like Vasumitra, Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna lived and wrote their works. Buddhism was introduced into China by Kashyapa Matanga which "thus opened the way for Indian civilization to Central and Eastern Asia".

THE BHARASHIVA NAGAS

The polilical successors of the Kushanas in Mathura and certain adjoining territories were the Nagas. During the 3rd and 4th centuries A. D. Naga rule is much in-prominence in western U. P. and Gwalior State. The *Puranas* mention two branches of Naga families, one ruling at Champavati and consisting of nine Naga kings and the other at Mathura with seven Naga kings. The dominions were further enriched by the addition of provinces of Kashghar, Yarkhand and Khotan, till then dependencies of China.

√ But Kanishka is famous in the annals of Northern Buddhism not so *much for his extensive* conquests and possessions as for his distinguished and active patronage to Buddhism. In testimony of the fervour of his faith he built many religious edifices and convened the fourth Buddhist council which was held in Kashmir. Kanishka, we are told, had *studied the Buddhist* scriptures in his leisure hours, but had been puzzled *by the diversity of opinions* and conclusions expressed therein. So he suggested to his adviser, the venerable Parshva, that the conflicts should be resolved by an authoritative explaination. To this Parshva readily agreed and a council was arranged to be held in Kashmir. It was *presided over by Vasumitra* and Ashvaghosha, the author of the famous *Buddhacharita*, was the vice-president. The 500 members who attended the council discussed the theological literature in great detail and perpared commentaries on the three divisions of the canon. The *work* included the *Mahavibhrsha*, an encyclopaedia of Buddhist philosophy, which is *still preserved in* the Chinese. Though himself a devout Buddhist, Kanishka whs *not* a fanatic and showed due respect to Greek, Sumerian, Zoroastrian, Elamite and Hindu deities worshipped among his different subjects. Men of outstanding literary, philosophical and *scientific* talent like Vasumitra, Ashvaghosha, Negarjuna and Charaka embellished his court and helped in moulding the cultural

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The Naga house of Padmavati was more important than the other. Naga coins reveal the names of as many as 10 Naga rulers. Bhava Naga seems to have ruled from *circa* 305 to 340 A. D. and his daughter was married to the Vakataka crown prince Rudrasena in *circa* 300 A. D. The capital Padmavati (identified with Padma Pawaya in Gwalior State) was in a flourishing condition under the Naga rule. Situated at the confluence of the Sindhu and the Para it had natural protection from three sides and boasted of magnificent palaces and temples. It was reputed to be a great centre of culture and education. Ganapati Naga, Nagasena and Nandi are the three of the Naga princes referred to in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta.

Though the rise of Samudragupta must have reduced the power of the Naga Kings, (the Allahabed Pillar inscription claims the destruction of the Naga power) still some members of the old houses continued to exist either as feudatories of the Guptas or their officials down to the decline of the Gupta Empire.

THE VAKATAKAS

√Just as the rise of the Satavahanas was a natural consequence of the dismemberment of the Maurya empire afer the death of Ashoka so was the birth and development of the power of the Vakatakas who rose out of a similar political vacuum.) The power of the Western Kshatrapas was on the decline in the latter half of the 3rd century A. D. for the Malavas had inflicted a severe defeat upon them and divested them of several parts of their possessions. } The collapse of the Satavahanas by 225 A. D. gave rise to several kingdoms like the Chutu Satakarnis, the Ikshvakus and Abhiras. Such circumstances, then, gave rise to the Vakatakas who in a comparatively short time not only consolidated their power but even extended it to formidable proportions.

√The Vakatakas were brahmanas by caste and Visnuvriddhi by *gotra*. It is not quite clear as to where their original home lay but the connection of the early Vakatakas with the village of Bagat or Vakat in Bundelkhand cannot be ruled out as an impossibility.

The founder of the dynasty, Vindhyashakti, is mentioned by the *Puranas* as a ruler of Vidisha (Bhilsa, near Bhopal) and Purika is mentioned as his early capital. Hence, observes Dr. Altekar, "we may presume that the nucleus of the original Vakataka principality lay in western C. P. or Berar." The ancestors of Vindhyashakti may have been local officers in Berar under the defunct Satavahana empire and the territorial possessions inherited by him must have comprised a district or two in Western C. P. Vindhyashaktí, taking advantage of the *favourable situation* may have extended his power across the Vindhya range into a portion of Malwa and thus sown the seeds of the expanding Vakataka hegemony. But Vindhyasbkti assumed no royal *titles and* was not crowned. He ruled for twenty years from 255 to 275 A. D.

The establishment of Vakataka power brought about by Vinhyashakti was completed by his illutrious son and successor Pravarasena I, who ruled from *275 to 335 A. D.* He extended the power of the Vakatakas over the greater part of the Deccan though we have no direct means of knowing now exactly he did it. He celebrated four horse sacrifices and *it is* possible that they were intended to commemorate his four different campaigns. His first campaign must have been directed towards the east and resulted in the annexation of the eastern parts *of C. P.*, perhaps up to Jubbulpore and Balaghat. The direction of the second campaign must have been *towards* the south and which must have added southern Berar and the North-west parts of the *Nizam's* dominions to his kingdom. The third thrust was in the direction of Andhradesha and *the fourth* resulted in establishing his overlord ship over eastarn Deccan, Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar The empire of Pravarasena included Northern Maharashtra, Berar, central Peovinces and a considerable part of Hydrabad State but his sphere of influence extended much further and was comprised of southern *Koshala*, Baghelkhand, Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar.

Pravarasena assumed the title of *samrat*, was an orthodox Hindu and performed *Vajapeya*, *Ashvamedha* and other vedic sacrifices. He had four sons each of whom were appointed as a Viceroy over the different groups of territories. His eldest son was Gautamiputra, who predeceased him and his other son was Sarvasena, who after his father's death ruled independently and was the founder of Basim branch in southern Berar which continued to rule contemporaneously with the main Vakatakas down to 525 A. D.

√ Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamiputra succeeded Pravarasena in 325 A. D. and ruled upto 360 A. D. It seems that Rudrasena I was involved in some difficulties and was helped out by his maternal grand-father King Bhavanaga of the Bharashiva dynasty. What this trouble was is not quite clear and it is argued that the rise of the Guptas may have menaced the very existence of the Vakatakas. But this theory does not seem to be probable for even the conquests of Samudragupta did not materially affect the Vakatakas who continued to rule as before. It is true that the title of Samrat which was used by his grandfather was not assumed by Rudrasena but this may be due to the fact that he did not perform the *Vajapeya* sacrifice. During his reign his uncle almost ruled independently over the portions allotted to his care by his grandfather. Rudrasena himself was weak and inexperienced but with the help of his maternal grand father Bhavanaga he soon managed to get an effective control over his kingdom. Gradually his difficulties smoothened out and once more the power and the prestige of the Vakatakas were stabilsed.

Rudrasena was succeeded by his son Prithvisena I, who ruled from 360 to 385 A. D. During his reign his relations with Vindhyashakti of the Bassim branch of the Vakatakas seem to be cordial and it is probable that Prithvisena I, substantially helped Vindhyashakti to defeat the king of Kuntala. This must have naturally raised his prestige and Chandragupta II thought it profitable to secure his alliance by matrimonial ties. Rudrasena II, the crown prince was then married to Prabhavatigupta the daughter of Chandragupta II at Pataliputra in 380 A. D.

Rudrasena II who succeeded Prithvisena in 385 A.D. was considerably under the influence of his powerful father-in-law Chandragupta II. He gave up Shaivism, his ancestral creed, and adopted Vaishnavism. The kingdom was in a prosperous condition and plans were laid for a joint offensive with the Gupta monarch, against the Shakas but had to be given up due to Rudrasena's premature death in 385 A. D.

Prabhavatigupta: Rudrasena II left behind him his two minor sons Divakarasena and Damodarasena and Prabhavatigupta, probably on the advice of her father, assumed the powers of a regent and carried on the administration for some twenty years. In this task she was not only helped with financial and military aid by her father but also with the supply of Gupta administrative officials. Prabhavatigupta suffered yet another bereavement with the death of her eldest son Divakarasena in the 13th year of her regency and Damodarasena was subsequently installed on the throne assuming Pravarasena II as his coronation name. It is probable that the famous poet Kalidasa may have been appointed a tutor to the young princes.

At the time of his accession to the throne in 410 A.D. Pravarasena II was 20 years old. He had no military or territorial ambitions and passed his time in peace. He was a man of literary taste and the composition of the Parkrit poem *Setubandha* is ascribed to him. The poem describes the valourous deeds of Rama in the conquest of Lanka.

The early capital of the Vakatakas was Purika which was later on shifted to Nandivardhana. Pravarasena founded a new capital which was named Pravarapura after him. In 430 A. D. Narendrasen, the crown prince was married to Ajitbhattarika, a daughter of the king Kuntala. Pravarasena II lived for about 30 years and died in 440 A. D.

Narendrasena succeeded Pravarasena II in 440 A. D. and ruled upto 460 A. D. During his reign the kingdom was threatened by invasion by a Nala king called Bhavadattavarman who penetrated deep into Vakataka dominions and even occupied Nandivardhan the capital, in 445 A. D. but was expelled by Narendrasena. Narendrasena seems to have been an efficient king who retrieved the fortunes of his family and raised its prestige by extending its sway over a large part of the Nala Kingdom.

Prithvisena II, ruled between 460 A. D. and 480 A. D. the tranquility of his reign was disturbed by an invasion of the Trai-kutaka king Dharasena who was ruling in southern Gujarat during 445-475 A. D. But Prithvisena drove out the invader and regained the lost territories. Prithvisena died childless and the kingdom passed into the hands of Harishena of the Bassim Vakataka branch and by 540 A. D. succumbed to the inevitable process of disintegration.

The appearance of new peoples and new kingdoms in the story of this period is closely paralled by rise of a great dramatist and poet and the introduction of a new trend in the *sphere of art.* The age of the Mauryas was essentially an age of the Prakrits and now Sanskrit *language* and *literature* were coming into their own.

In 1909 Pandit T. Ganapati Shastri of Trivendrum, while on a tour in search of manuscripts made an epoch making discovery. He came across some palm leaf MSS. Almost all the plays ascribed to Bhasa were there in those Mss. For a long while scholarly opinion was generally critical of the genuineness of the plays and they were considered to be a kerala copy of the works of the celebrated dramatist whose works, it was believed were apparently lost and his name being known only through references in other works. Like the authenticity of his plays, the date of Bhasa is also a subject of keen controversy, dates ranging from 6th century B.C. to 11th century A. D. being proposed for him by diverse protagonists. It is safer however, to generally describe him as a pre-Gupta dramatist and it is not profitable, at this stage, on the strength of the available evidence, to ascribe any specific date.

The plays so discovered are thirteen in numbers. Of these the *Svapnavasavadatta* and the *Pratidnya* have historical subjects; the *Avimaraka* and *Charudatta* are original in theme; the *Balacharita*, *Sutaghatotkacha*, *Dutavakya*, *Karnabhara*, *Madhyamavyayoga*, *Pancharata*, *Uaubhanga* are based on Mahabharata topics while the *Pratima* and *Abhisheka* deal with Ramayana themes.

In all his dramas Bhasa shows his consummate skill at characterization and his intimate *knowledge of the* psychology of the different classes of society from which

In his poems Ashvaghosha reveals his mastery over the Kavya form and his wide and thorough knowledge of diverse sciences like philosophy and grammar. The significance and importance of his works can be readily gauged from his influence on Kalidasa, the greatest poet of India.

While new modes were being slowly evolved in literary composition a very interesting experiment was being conducted in the domain of sculpture. We have seen earlier how there were *two distinct tendencies in the art* of ancient India. The first was the indegenous tradition reflected in the art of Barhut and Samchi and the other foreign-influenced art of the Mauryas. The Gandhara art of this period essentially belongs to the latter category with this important difference that the Maurya artist so wields his imagination that all foreign influence is assimilated and metamorphosed while the Gandhara artist—being a foreigner—hardly underlands the spiritual concepts of which he *makes a free use.* The most important specimens of the Gandhara art come from the N. W. frontier, the Mathura and Sarnath regions but its influence could also be seen in the sculptures of Amravati.

The Gandhara school owes its origin to the patronage of the great Kushanas. The Kushanas imported foreign artists and through their agency carried the application of Hellenistic technique to Indian subjects much further than had ever been done before. ' Such foreign artists, accredited by royal authority and the fashion of the court, must have been readily accepted as *teachers by the* local Indian sculptors, who after their accumstomed manner, would have *proceeded to adopt the* new methods to their own purposes, sometimes perhaps bettering on the instructions of their masters. Two distinct elements are seen at work in this art and these are the Greek and Buddhist. The Greek technique is used for giving expression, in stone, to exclusively Buddhist sentiments and the result though pleasing when at its best at first sight, is queer on second thoughts. From the artistic point of view the art is neither Greek nor Indian—a combination of two heteroclite elements. We see, for instance, that in whatever posture, the Buddha wears long hair and presents in his person a half-prince and half-spiritual being. Incidently it is to this art that the origin of the Buddha image is generally ascribed. A prominent example of such an idealized king-monk image is the seated Buddha from the Berlin Museum. Other examples are to be found in the museums at Mathura and Sarnath.

The art of the Gandhara school has become the subject of almost unstinted praise and undiluted condemnation. "The best works of the Gandhara school" says Vincent Smith, "are deserving of high commendation for their aesthetic, technical and phonetic qualities, to use Fergusson's terminology; or in other words, because they are intrinsically beautiful, skilfully executed and well-adapted to express both the ideal of the artist and the religious sentiment of his patrons." On the other hand, this is what Dr. Coormaswamy, another great authority on the subject has to say about the Gandhara school. "The quality of the art" he says "is effeminate and sensual, its intention realistic".

Of greater interest to us is the stupa of Amaravati, a product of the Andhra—Satavahana age. The stupa is situated near the small town of Amaravati on the south bank of the Krishna river in the Guntur district of the Madras Presidency. The stupa was richly decorated with a sculptured railing running all round t, as in the case of Samchi and Barhut. The sculptures depict various *jataka* scenes and episodes from the life of the Buddha. As in Gandhara art the later specimens at Amaravati betray strong Mahayanist influences. The imaginative grasp of the artist coupled with his close observation of nature and his efforts to reproduce the feeling behind the scene have evoked such high encomiums as the following: "The sculptures at Amaravati offer delightful studies of animal life, combined with extremely beautiful conventionalized ornament and that the most varied and difficult movements of human figure are drawn and modelled with great freedom and skill".

The other artistic expressions of the age are to be found in the Nasik, Karla and Kanheri caves. These caves represent a further and architecturally important advance over the previous models. The plan is generally the same; a number of residential cells with an attendant *chaitya* or hall of worship (or stupa). The capitals display great ingenuity, a delicacy of feeling and a bold imaginative sweep.

The architectural and cultural remains of the age abundantly show the prosperous economic conditions. The jewelry as shown at Amaravati is of infinitely diverse type and the social life appears to be highly conventionalized and elegant. As in the previous periods, pearl fringes over the hair, armlets, bangles and anklets in the case of women, formed the most important parts of the treasure-chest.

The influx of foreigners in India produced some significant effects on the social structure. Along with their political power the foreigners were completely hinduised and thus increased the compositional variety of Hindu society.

Such was the age, with its new peoples and kingdoms, new modes of expression in literature and art, an imperative precursor to the classical age of Ancient India.

IX

THE GOLDEN AGE

THE political history of ancient India is a story of chronic dissipation followed by periods of hectic Imperial activity. The periods of dissipation are characterised by the absence of a strong cental power bringing in its wake a process of disintegration in the political field. At such periods the picture of political conditions is composed of small monarchies, petty principalities and inconspicuous republics engaged in internecine warfare resulting in chaos and confusion. The *Arthaskastra* calls this as "*Matsyanyaya*," popularly understood as the big fish swallowing the smaller ones. From this period of anarchy and turmoil gradually emerges a power that is at once ambitious in conception and imperial in design.

Such a set of conditions attended the rise of the Guptas. The Maurya empire ran its own course and succumbed to the historical forces of political disintegration. The downfall of the Kushana empire in Aryavarta (western India) synchronised with that of the Andhra empire in Dakshinapatha (Deccan). The disappearance of the rule of both these powerful dynasties from the stage of India history took place during the first half of the third century A. D. Then followed—except in the Panjab and the far north-west of India—a period of anarchy which continued for some time, till all disorder settled down under the suzerain power of the Gupta monarchs who succeeded in establishing a northern Indian empire which lasted in all its glory for well-nigh two and a half centuries.

The Gupta Clan: The clan which was raised to imperial dignity by the efforts of Chandragupta I and Samudragupta has its origin and early history obscured by vague traditions and ambiguous references. It is probable that some Guptas must have held official positions under the Satavahanas as is evidenced by the Nasik and Karle Cave inscriptions. It is not quite clear whether these Guptas were connected with the Imperial Gupta family. The well-known Barhut pillar-inscription of the Shunga period refers to Rajan Visadeva as Gauptiputra indicating thereby that his mother belonged to the Gupta clan. The same surname Gauptiputra occurs in many other ancient records. These references definitely mean that the clan of the Guptas was not an obscure one; on the other hand the name was fairly well-known and common.

Traces of Gupta rule in Magadha are found as early as the 2nd century A. D. I-Tsing (the Chinese traveller who visited India in the 7th century A. D.) tells us of a Maharaja Shri Gupta (Cha-li-ki-to) who built a temple near Mrigasikhavana for some Chinese pilgrims. I-Tsing's date would place Shri Gupta round about 175 A. D.

Attempts have been made by some scholars to identify this Shri Gupta with the grandfather of Chandragupta I, but the identification lacks an element of finality.

Describing the political conditions before the rise of the Guptas Dr. R. N. Dandekar says: "The sequence of the political events after the fall of the Kanva dynasty therefore seems to be as follows: The Kanvas were overthrown by a Satavahana King who subsequently became the ruler of Magadha. The *Satavahanas could not have* been at Pataliputra and in Magadha for more than fifty years after the fall of the Kanvas. During the period when the early Kushana princes, Kadphises and Wema, were advancing against the Satavahana prince in Northern India, a local Licchavi ruler established himself at Pataliputra. The Licchhavis, however, in their turn, had also to quit Pataliputra ultimately when a minister of Kanishka advanced against the Magadha capital. The Kushanas were thus virtual masters of the whole of Northern India for sometime after the beginning of the decadence of the Andhra power. During this period the eastwhile feudatories of the Andhras were trying to make themselves politically independent. The downfall of the Kushanas . . . was accompanied by the rise of the Bharashivas . . . There were thus two great dynasties about that time (i. e. circa 250 A. D.) in Northern India, that of the Bharashivas, who rose to power immediately after the fall of the Kushanas and that of the Vakatakas.

We saw above that the first Gupta name we come across in the history of the period is that of Shri Gupta. The names of Shri Gupta's immediate successors are not known. The earliest name which is directly connected with the imperial Guptas is that of Maharaja Gupta who was succeeded by his son Maharaja Ghatotkacha.

The first independent sovereign (*Maharajadhiraja*) of importance in the line is of Chandragupta I, the son of Ghatotkacha. His accession could be placed in 320 A. D. held to be the initial date of the Gupta era. Like his great predecessor in Magadha,—King Bimbisara,—Chandragupta I, strengthened his position by a matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis of Vaishali and laid the foundations of an empire, which through its very life, symbolised the golden or classical age of ancient India.

The clan of the Licchavis was a famous clan celebrated, ages ago, in the annals of early Buddhism. Kumara Devi, whom Chandragupta I married, brought to her husband valuable political influence in the shape of a dowry and which in the course of a few years secured to him a paramount position in Magadha and the neighbouring countries. It seems highly probable that at the time of this fateful union the Licchavis were the masters or overlords of the imperial city and that Chandragupta, with this matrimonial alliance, naturally succeeded to the power held before by his wife's relatives. With what importance was the event regarded by the Guptas could easily be judged by the issue of joint coins mentioning Chandragupta and the Licchavis. It is very likely that the Guptas and the Licchavis ruled over two contagious states which were amalgamated with the marrige of Chandragupta I, and Kumara Devi. A portion of north and west Bengal may be regarded as forming a part of the Gupta territory and North Bihar as that of the Licchavis. It is certain that by his Licchavi connection the status of Chandragupta I, was raised from that of a petty chieftain like that of his father and grandfather—to such political dignity that he thought it fit in assuming the lofty title of "Sovereign of Maharajas" usually associated with a claim to paramountcy. He struck coins in the joint names of himself, his queen and the Licchavis and his son and successor proudly described himself as the son of the daughter of the Licchavis.

Chandragupta I, extended his dominions along the Gangetic valley as far as the junction of the Ganges and the Jamuna, where modern Allahabad stands. He ruled during his brief tenure on the throne,a populous and fertile territory which included Tirhut, South Bihar, Oudh and certain other adjoining districts. In the opinion of many scholars the Gupta era dates from the reign of Chandragupta I.

Chandragupta I, was succeeded by Samudragupta, one of the greatest conquerors and kings of ancient India. The period of his reign that of his successor marks the zenith of the glory of the Guptas. His Court poet Harishena, who was also an officer of importance, has left us a unique record of Samudragupta's early life and achievements.

The fourth verse of the Allahabad Pilldr inscription composed by Harishena describes a memorable scene from the court of Chandragupta I.. The full court was assembled, we are told by the poet, and "Samudragupta who being looked at (with envy) by the faces, melancholy (through the rejection of themselves), of others of equal birth, while the attendants of the court breathed forth deep sighs (of happiness), was bidden by (his) father, who, exclaiming "verily (he is) worthy embraced (him) with the hairs of (his) body standing erect (through pleasure) (and this) indicative of (his) sentiments, and (him) with an eye turning round and round in affection, (and) laden with tears (of joy,) (and) perceptive of (his) noble nature,—(to govern of surety) the whole world,." These lines tell us of how Chandragupta I selected Samudragupta from among his other brothers as heir apparent to the throne of the Guptas. It is possible that in his old age Chandragupta I, abdicated in favour of Samudragupta or that "princes of the royal blood had coveted the throne and these contending claims for succession were exciting the public, and perhaps even disturbing the political life. In order to put a stop to all dangers for the present and future, the King perhaps in the presence of all, nominated Samudragupta as his successor."

The Court poet Harishena, while describing the nomination of Samudragupta as the successor of Chandragupta I, refers to the feelings of joy arising in the hearts of some while the others felt sad, envious and jealous. The small number of gold coins with the name of a Kacha has given rise to a controversy among scholars regarding his identification. Fleet, Vincent Smith, Allan and Raychoudhuri argued that Kacha was but another name for Samudragupta while Rapson proposed that Kacha was a brother of Samudragupta who enjoyed a very short reign as Samudragupta's predecessor. Rev. Fr. Heras was the first to suggest that "a rebellion of Samudragupta's brothers against him in the beginning of his reign is hinted at in the Allahabad inscription and probably even described in the same. ... His brothers seem to be allied against Samudragupta, most likely to proclaim king the eldest among them in his stead. Such proclamation was actually carried out, and the eldest brother of Samudragupta, presumably Kacha was enthroned; ... But this intrusion did not last long; ... Soon Samudragupta defeated his brothers, and they finally acknowledged him as the real successor of their father."

After having put down the unsuccessful rebellion of his brother Samudragupta turned towards the consolidation of his Kingdom. The Allahabad inscription tells us of his conquests in Aryavarta as also in the south. Three stages in these conquest could easily be discerned and the following lines give an idea of the events and their extent.

The First Phase: The 13th line of the Inscription refers to Achyuta, Nagasena and Kotakubja who were uprooted by Samudragupta. This was the first phase of his campaigns. Achyuta was a ruler of Ahicchatra and along with Nagasena—a Naga king of Mathura—was a scion of the Naga family of Champa. Kotakubja was a ruler of Shravasti. The reason for this battle seems to be that the three kings, taking advantage of Samudragupta's preoccupation in putting down the rebellion of his brothers led by Kacha jointly made war on him with a view to regaining their independent status. The battle must have been fought at Kaushambi, since it was the most convenient place where the Kings of Ahicchatra, Mathura and Padmavati could meet and where the Allahabad Pillar was originally erected at that time. The defeat of these three kings helped in the consolidation of Samudragupta's empire round about Magadha after which event he proceeded on his triumphant march to the south.

The Second Phase: We are told about the twelve kings of Dakshinapatha who were subjugated by Samudragupta in the 19th line of the inscription. The twelve kings are as follows:

(1) Mahendra of Koshala—South Koshala in the Mahanadi Valley, comprising parts of the modern districts of Jubbulpore, Raipore, Bilaspore and Sambalpore.

(2) Vyagharaja of Mahakantara—Southern forest country—tributory *states of Orissa* and *the* backward tracts of the central provinces (Jaso *State*).

(3) Mantaraja of Koshala—*either the district round* the modern lake Kalleru or Kerala.

(4) Mahendra of Pishthapura,—Pithapuram in the Godavari district.

(5) Swamidatta of Kotthura;–Kothoor, 12 miles south south-east of Mahendragiri in Ganjam district.

(6) Damana of Erandapalla—Erandol in Khandesh or Ganjam district.

(7) Vishnugopa of Kanchi—Conjeeveram in the Chingleput district, Madras.

(11) Kubera of Devarashtra—Yellamamchili in the Vizagapattam district.

(12) Dhananjaya of Kusthalapura—not definitely identified. May be Kuttabur in Northern Arcot.

From the identification of the place names given it is possible to trace the route of Samudragupta's triumphant march in the South. He must have passed through the Rewa State and the Jubbulpore district, defeated Mahendra of Mahakoshala, entered the Eastern Gondwana forest, where he defeated the chief Vyagharaja and emerged on the eastern coast in the Vizagapattam district. After emerging from the forest Samudragupta defeated Mantaraja of Koshala and another Mahendra of Pishthapura; then proceeded south and defeated Swamidatta of Kottura hill". Then Samudragupta advanced as far as Vengi and Kanchi.

The magnitude of the campaign undertaken by Samudragupta can easily be judged from its results. The whole campaign involved some 2,000 to 3,000 miles of marching across diverse types of territories with few tracks and fewer roads and must have taken at least three years for its completion.

into Gupta territory as is evidenced by his inscription at Sisunia. Matila, who ruled over the territory of modern Bulundsahr district, Ganapati Naga of Nalapura or Narwar in Gwalior State, Balavarman of Assam and other kings of Aryavarta suffered the same fate.

Tribal States: Besides the above mentioned kingdoms which *either came under the direct sway of the* Imperial Guptas or were feudatory to them there were several border states and tribal republics who declared their allegiance to the Gupta sovereign. The Malawas (Mandsore State), the Arjunayanas (in the Punjab), the Yaudheyas (Bharatpur State, Garwhal and Rohilkhand), the Madrakas (Sialkot), the Abhiras (western Rajputana), the Prarjunas (*Central* Provinces) the Sanakanikas, the Kakas and the Kharaparikas (Damoh district in C. P.) preferred to give tribute to the mighty Gupta monarch rather than risk a war with him. Likewise the kings of Samatata (Part of East Bengal bordering on the sea), Davaka, Kamarupa (Assam), *Nepala and Kartripura* (Katarapur in Jullundhar District) fully gratified the *imperious commands* of Samudragupta.

By *now* the power and prestige of Samudragupta were felt even outside the borders of India and even foreign kings sought to establish their friendship by sending presents to his Court. The inscription mentions Daivaputra Shahi Shahanushahi — a Kushana prince, Saka Murunda (foreign *potentate* ruling *over* some parts of Central India) and Meghavarna of Ceylon as sending presents to Samudragupta.

Shortly *after the termination* of hostilities Samudagupta celebrated the famous Horse sacrifice signifying that he was the Lord paramount of India. According to ancient and time-honoured tradition every king with any pretensions to supreme power had to formally establish his claim by performing the horse-sacrifice. A horse was let loose to wander at its own sweet will wherever it liked for a period of one year. Any king wanting to challenge the supremacy of the king to whom the horse belonged hindered its progress. A conclusive battle was fought and the horse was set free to return to the capital in a year's time after its peregrination. Samudragupta commemorated this important event by issuing a type of coin well-known as the *Ashvamedha* type.

The empire of Samudragupta comprised nearly the whole of Northern India (excluding Kashmir) Western Punjab, Western Rajputana, Sind and Gujarat, together with the highland of Cchattisgarh and Orissa and a long stretch of territory along the eastern coast extending as far south as Chingleput. The home provinces and certain other adjacent territories were directly administered through the Emperor's own officials while the tributory states functioned under the local potentates.

Samudragupta's Personality: It is not surprising that the man who was able to achieve so much and with such thoroughness had an outstanding and many sides personality. The *Manjushri Mulakapla*, a Mahayanist Buddhist book gives the following character sketch of Samudragupta. "Samudragupta was lordly shedder of excessive blood, of great powers and dominions, heartless ever vigilent, (mindful) about his own person, unmindful of the hereafter, sacrificing animals."

This being a Buddhist account cannot be expected to be very complimentary to a Brahmanical king but still the sketch brings out Samudragupta's manliness and dominating personality. The inscription tells us that he always took pleasure in associating with learned people and was a "supporter of *the sacred* scriptures". He always offered generous patronage to poetry and learning and was himself an accomplished musician. He was an excellent warrior and his "most charming body was covered with all the beauty of the marks of a hundred confused wounds" received on numerous fields *of battle*. *An* outstanding soldier king of our ancient times, Samudragupta could not yet be described as *a militarist*. His conquests of the southern territories and his generous treatment of their kings bear eloquent *testimony* to his high ideals of *Dharamavijaya*. It is customery to describe Samudragupta as the Napoleon of India; such a description though encomious is not quite just to the *former for Napoleon* regarded kingdom-taking as the duty of kings while Samudragupta's actions were *strictly regulated* by the Hindu ideal of *Dharmavijaya* Though a soldier through the all-powerful requirements *of his* station in life, Samudragupta was a man of learning and culture, tolerant in his religions *beliefs* (though himself a fervent Hindu he readily granted permission to the Ceyloness' embassy *to* build *a* monastry for Buddhist pilgrims) and gallant in the treatment of his adversaries. We know *from* an incription that his chief queen was Dattadevi. He must have ruled for a long period and his [illegible] must have lasted from 328-29 [illegible] to 377-78 A[illegible] called Ramagupta who was the immediate successor of Samudragupta.

It was generally known that a drama called *Devi-Chandragupta* by Vishakhadatta existed from scattered references to it in the *Natyadarpana* of Ramchandra and Gunachandra. Fragments of the drama were also, likewise, preserved, in the *Shringaraprakasha* of Bhoja. By piecing together all such notices we get a connected story of Ramgupta.

The story of Ramagupta, if told in a connected form would run as follows. It appears that Samudragupta was succeeded by his son Ramagupta, who was such an imbecile that rather than lose his life and kingdom in war, he consented to send out his wife Dhruvadevi to the harem of the Shaka king of Mathura (probably a ruler of the western Kshatrapa dynasty); his brother Chandragupta, however came to his rescue, and attiring himself as a lady, went into the Shaka King's harem and killed him there. Eventually he killed his brother and married his wife.

It is true that this King Ramagupta is no where directly referred to in any of the Gupta inscriptions but literary references like that in the *Harshacharita* of Banna and in the *Majmal-ut-Tawarikh* as also the Sanjan Copper plates lend credence to the story of Ramagupta.

One important objection towards the acceptance of the Ramagupta story is the improbability of the Shakas growing so powerful immediately after the death of Samudragupta as to impose such humiliating conditions on his successor. It is suggested that "in spite of Samudragupta's conquests and expeditions, the glory of the Gupta empire began to decline perhaps towards the end of his reign. His forward policy must have created a number of enemies who must have been waiting only for a suitable opportunity to reassert themselves."

CHANDRAGUPTA II

With the ignominous blot upon the honour of the Guptas being removed, Chandragupta II consequently succeeded on the Gupta throne. It appears from the conventional Gupta geneology that *Chandragupta II was chosen* by his father Samudragupta to succeed him but as this was not madę public Ramagupta succeeded Samudragupta. After the death of Ramagupta, Chandragupta II assuming charge of the administration as the legal monarch started operations for the consolidation of the empire. The Meherauli Pillar which is often ascribed to him tells us that he fought the Bahlikas and *strengthened* his northwest dominions from the Jullundhar Doab to Mathura. *He also annihilated* the power of the western Kshatrapas and annexed their dominions. These operations put an end to the longest foreign dominion on the Indian soil and added the important and fertile territories of Kathiawar and Northern Gujarat to the Gupta Empire. The Empire now extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian sea. The acquisition of these coastal areas with their populous and rich hinterlands *facilitated* the commercial activities of the people who were thus brought into a closer contact with the western world.

The empire of Chandragupta II was substantially the same as that of his father with addition of Malwa and the Kathiawar peninsula. *It extended from the* Arabian sea to the Bay of Bengal and the Himalayas to the Narmada.

An important feature of the "foreign" policy of the Guptas is the political significance of their matrimonial alliances. We saw before that the marriage of Chandragupta I, with the Licchavi princess Kumaradevi, helped much in the foundation of the Gupta Empire. In the reign of Chandragupta II such marriages again come to the forefront as matters of policy. The Vakatakas, though not so powerful as to endanger the political existence of the Gupta dynasty, were sufficiently strong to cause embarrassment and annoyance if provoked into hostile action. So, instead of waging mutually destructive wars the Guptas placated the Vakatakas and earned their support in times of stress by marrying Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter of Chandragupta II to the Vakataka Rudrasena II. Chandragupta II himself married Kuberanga, a Naga princess, while a daughter of Kakusthavarman, the Kadamba King was married to his son Kumaragupta. All these matrimonial connections were the forerunners of solid polititical alliances which helped in creating a sense of internal security, peace and prosperity.

Chandragupta—Vikramaditya of Ujjain?: The glorious military exploits of Chandragupta II naturally compare well with those of Vikramaditya of Ujjain, the most celebrated and almost legendary figure in Indian sagas and tales. Dr. R. N. Dandekar is of the opinion that though Pataliputra was the official capital, Chandragupta II made Ujjain his second capital "probably in view of the special exigencies of administration that arose particularly on account of the wars against the Shakas and the consequent reorganisation of the newly acquired territory in that region". This fact would naturally account for the genesis of the glorious cycle of legends about Vikramaditya of Ujjain. *Again, it is also true that* Chandragupta II, like his father before him, assumed a *title* in this case Vikramaditya. In the opinion of many scholars he is the original of the lengendary king Vikramaditya of Ujjain, who defeated the Shakas and was the founder of the Vikram Samvat.

Chandragupta II had at least two wives. The first was *his elder brother's* widow Dhruvadevi and the second Kuberanaga. He had at least one daughter Prabhavatigupta—who was married to the Vakataka. Rudrasena II and three sons Kumarrgupta, Govindagupta and perhaps also Ghatotkachagupta. The latter two were appointed to rule as Viceroys over certain provinces of his vast empire. Besides his titles Chandragupta II had another name Devagupta and though he is styled as a *Paramabhagavata*, a Vaishnava in some inscriptions, he was tolerant in his religious attitude and liberal in his actions. He enjoyed a fairly long reign of more than 36 years (376-7 A. D. to 415-16 A. D.).

The reign of Chandragupta saw the consolidation of the Gupta empire and represents the zenith of Gupta glory. It was during his reign that all foreign domination in India was ended and there followed a period of social peace and economic prosperity. The acquisition of the Kathiawar seaboard gave an impetus to overseas trade and migration and consequently helped much towards increasing the prosperity of the land.

But it is in the field of coins that Chandragupta II's contribution is the most striking. It was he who introduced innovation in the gold, silver and copper coinage of the country. His coins are characterised by considerable originality and artistic beauty. Generally they represent a purely Indian type of goddess seated on a lotus while the other designs are the couch, the umbrella, and the horseman. The texture and execution of the coins well reflect the prosperity and high artistic talents of the people of the age.

KUMARAGUPTA I

Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya was succeeded by his son from Dhruvadevi, Kumaragupta I. His reign though peaceful and prosperous in the beginning ended in disaster. Obviously to the peaceful part of his reign belong the thirteen inscriptions–the largest number referring to any one Gupta King–and the numerous coins found in widely scattered areas. From the findspots and the contents of these inscriptions it can easily be surmised that Kumaragupta I was able to preserve intact the vast empire bequeathed to him by his glorious father.

Kumaragupta I, like his predecessors on the Gupta throne followed a policy of religious toleration. He built a temple of Kartikeya in Bilsad in the Etah district, in the United Provinces; he dedicated an image of a Jaina Tirthankara at Mathura; he is described as *Pardmadaivata* in another insciption signifying thereby that he was staunch devotee of Vishnu. As would become a Hindu king he performed an *Ashvamedha* in commemoration of which event he issued his very rare *Ashvamedha* coins.

A number of incriptions throw important and interesting light on the governmental system of the times. The Kingdom seems to have been divided into different provinces for the purposes of administration and each part was governed by a viceroy who was invariably a member of the royal family. We have thus Chiratadatta ruling over the Punnavardhanā Bhukti of Northern Bengal, prince Ghatotkacha Gupta administering Eastern Malwa including Tumbavana and Bandhuvarman ruled from Dashapur in Western Malwa.

The fairly prosperous and peaceful reign of this king was overshadowed by the dark clouds of invasion by foreigners. It is generally believed that the adversary of the Gupta King was the king of the Pushyamitras. Who these Pushyamitras were it is difficult to say. But whoever they might have been the effect of their hostilities is all too evident. Not only did they constitute a grave menace to the empire but were responsible for "ruining the fortunes of the Gupta family". The enemies, it appears, had great resources in men and money and it is possible that the Gupta king met with serious setbacks.

"Kumargupta I" says Prof. R. D. Banerji "was weak in character and fond of a life of easy indolence and he was no intrepid leader of men." The *Manjushri Mula Kalpa* describes him as by no means a weak king and it is possible that old age when the foreign invasion came, found him incapable of dealing with it squarely in all its magnitude and fury.

Kumaragupta I, was also known as Shri Mahendar, Ashvamedhamahendra, Simhavikrama, Vyaghrabalaparakrama etc. His reign was a long one and extended over 40 years (415 A. D. to 455 A. D.) His queen was known as Anantadevi and at least two sons Puragupta, son of Anantadevi and Skandagupta son of Devaki, another queen, are known to us. It is probable that Kumaragupta I died while the struggle with the Pushyamitras was still undecided.

SKANDAGUPTA

Skandagupta who was fighting the Huna hoardes in the last days of Kumaragupta I, was his successor after his death. The Bhitari Pillar incription describes him as the saviour of the family fortune, fighting the barbarians, undergoing great hardships, spending a whole night on a couch that was the bare earth, conquering the Pushyamitras and defeating them. He is credited by the same inscription to have conquered his enemies by the strength of his arm and re-establish the ruined fortunes of his lineage.

The early part of the reign of Skandagupta was no doubt full of troubled events and a war of succession appears probable though the evidence for it is vague. A gold coin on which the King is represented as standing with a bow and an arrow in his hands with the figure of Lakshmi on the right, when read in conjunction with the statement in the Junagadh inscription that the "Goddess of sovereignty, discarding all other princess selected him of her own accord," would lend support to the view that Skandagupta did not rightfully succeed to the throne but had to secure it with his own prowess and valour.

The early life of Skandagupta was a long succession of battles waged to stem the tide of the depredatory bands of the same Hunas who had shaken the very foundations of the kingdoms of Europe. He is credited with having defeated his enemies and thus it was due to him that the tragedy of the devastation of the fair soil of India by waves of foreign marauders was postponed, if not, decreased in fury. As to who these Hunas were, it will be discussed later on. Suffice it to say here, that they lived in Central Asia on the Western Border of China as far back as 2nd century B. C. and one branch of them called the Ephthalites or the white Hunas were the barbarians who menaced the existence of the Gupta throne. Skandagupta was able to check their progress, even though temporarily, before 460-1 A. D.

The long drawn out warfare necessitated by the eruption of the Hunas on the borders of India necessarily reflected on the economic life of the land in impoverishing the aoyal treasury and disturbing commerce and industry. This is specially so in the case of coinage. The Gold coins of Skandagupta are rare and of depreciated purity, the causes of which may easily be traced to his wars with the Hunas and other internal troubles.

An inscription found at Mandasor mentions Chandragupta II and his son Govindagupta but nowhere is the name of Skandagupta to be found in it. A clay seal found at Vaishali refers to Chandragupta II his Queen Dhruvadevi and their son Govindagupta II. This would suggest that Govindagupta had rebelled against his nephew Skandagupta. Similar inscriptions from Western Malwa give evidence of growing rebellions among the feudatories of the Guptas. Narendrasena, the Vakataka King claims that his commands were obeyed by the lords of Koshala, Mekala and Malava which indicates his powerful position. All such bits of evidence tempt us to deduce, that internal troubles which formed a most potent contributory factor in the disintegration of the Gupta empire, had already started their corroding influence.

The political sagacity of Skandagupta becomes evident in his appointment of trustworthy Governors or wardens of the marches for the purposes of preserving internal security and as sentinels for apprehending foreign invasions. From the Junagadh rock inscription we know of Parna Datta of Saurashtra who was responsible for the reconstruction of the broken dam. Sarva Naga of Antarvedi or the Gangetic Doab, Bhimavarman of the Kosam region were some of the governors appointed by Skandagupta.

Skandagupta had a fairly crowded but a short reign spreading over 12 years. (455-6 A. D. to 467-8 A. D.). Like his predecessors he adopted the titles of Kramaditya, Vikramaditya and Deva Raja. His achievement could best be summarised in describing him as a ceaseless fighter for the protection of his motherland from spoliation by foreign barbarians, a tolerant monarch in matters religions, though himself a devout Bhagavata, and a wise administrator all of which go to mark him out as one of the greatest of the Gupta Emperors who died a hero in harness.

Already in the reign of Skandagupta the empire very obviously betrayed signs of cracking up and lapsed back into the state of dissolution. The story of the later imperial Guptas only brings the element of dissolution in the forefront. The history of the period after Skandagupta is more or less a story of chaos with occasional flashes in the shape of the names of kings and their short reigns which were mainly occupied with incessant struggle with enemies both internal as well as external. From the mass of indefinite, inconclusive and conflicting evidence only a bare outline of events could be formed. And the following lines attempt to present a rough sketch of the times.

his royal ambitions fulfilled when he succeeded on the Gupta throne after his brother's death. He had a very short reign and died sometime before 473 A. D. He, as well as his successor, do not seem to have had any hold over the distant provinces of Skandagupta's Empire, like Central India, Gujarat, Malwa and Saurashtra. His queen was named Vatsadevi and his son was Narasinhagupta Baladitya about whom nothing much is known.

Kumaragupta II: The very name of this king suggests that he must have been very young when he succeeded to the throne. He assumed the title of Kramaditya. His was a very short reign which must have terminated before 476-77 A. D.

Budhagupta: With *Budhagupta we are on firmer* ground. Six of his records have been known so far and these show us beyond the shadow of a doubt that he ruled over extensive dominions. His empire included Northern Bengal, the Kashi country and parts of Central India. He ruled for twenty years from 477 to 496 A. D.

The Maitrakas of Valabhi: The dynasty of the Maitrakas which ruled over the Kathiawar Peninsula with Valabhi as their capital from 500 to 770 A. D. shows how slowly the officers *and feudatories of* the Guptas, in their period of decline, were either found*ing their own kingdoms* or throwing off the allegiance to the Guptas. From the numerous records left by the dynasty we learn that Bhattaraka, a general of the Gupta emperor grew to be so powerful as to become the chief of Saurashtra. The Mairtrakas, at least in the early days, nominally acknowledged the suzerainty of the Guptas, but later on, when the power of the Guptas had reached its nadir they declared themselves independent. Similar was the case with the Parivrajaka Maharajas and the Ucchakalpa Kings.

Bhanugupta Baladitya II: The reign of Bhanugupta Baladitya II is memorable for it was during this period that a crushing defeat was inflicted on Mihiragula, a Huna Chieftain and the successor of Toramana in alliance with Yashovarman of Mandasor.

The Hunas: The Hunas were a band of nomadic savages originally living in the neighbourhood of China. They advanced towards the west and split up into two main streams, one going towards the Volga and the other to the Oxus. The Volga-bound division figures prominently in the annals of the Roman empire. The other band, originally subject to the Joan Joan tribe, became very powerful in the Oxus Valley towards the middle of the fifth century. They were named Hephthalities or Ephthalities or the white Hunas after the name of their ruler's family. From the Oxus valley they descended upon Persia and India. Skandagupta inflicted a crushing defeat upon them, sometime between 455 to 467 A. D. and saved the Gupta empire from their ravages. The rulers of Persia were less successful and in about 5th century A. D. the Huna power attained its greatest height ruling over a vast empire with the capital at Balkh. About the activities of the Hunas in India very little is known. Two kings Toramana and Mihirgula are known from inscriptions and coins. Toramana, we are told by the Jain work *Kuralayamita* was the king of Uttarapatha. He lieved at Pavvatya on the banks of Chumbal. The capital of Mihirkula, accor

Hiuen Tsiang was Shakala. He first took some interest in Buddhism but later on became hostile, working for the extermination of the faith.

The Hunas descended upon India in two waves. The first may be dated about 460 A. D. They were defeated by Skandagupta but were able to retain possession of Gandhara and founded a petty kingdom there.

The second wave was led by Tormana, after two centuries. They were able to penetrate as far as Malwa. Mihirkula, the successor of Toramana was finally defeated by the combined efforts of Narsinha Gupta and Yashovarman of Mandasor.

Due to incessant warfare with the Huna hordes and struggles with the feudatories, who were progressively *becoming powerful and aggressive*, along with the weakness manifest at the centre, the Gupta empire crumbled to ruin. Certain vestiges of Gupta rule in some parts of India continued for some time afterwards but they were too local and insignificant to count in an all Indian historical recapitulation. The empire of the Imperial Guptas which had its foundations laid by the brave efforts of Samudragupta and which reached its zenith of glory through the glorious exploits of Chandragupta II had now, for all *intents* and purposes caesed to be. The golden age of ancient India continued *for about a century illuminating its life and* culture.

Government administration during the Gupta period had attained a very high state of development and efficiency. The King, it is needless to add, was the repository of all powers, civil, judicial and military but he often consulted his council of ministers on important points of statecraft. In Gupta times a sovereign was often appointed by his predecessor and the right was not absolutely hereditary. Princes, in their formative years were entrusted with responsible administrative posts with a view to accord to them a background of practical training and to develop their ability to take quick and effective decisions.

The Viceroys in charge of the larger units were generally persons from the royal family. The King had a council of ministers to assist him.

The empire, for the purpose of efficient administration was divided into provinces called *Deshas*. The head of a *Desha* was a Viceroy. The provinces were again subdivided into *bhuktis* which were about the size of the commissioner's divisions in modern times. The *bhuktis* were, in their turn, subdivided into *vishayas*, equivalent to a modern district. The officers in charge of the *bhuktis* were known as *Uparikas* who were directly appointed by the emperor. The *Vishayas* were administered by *Vishayapatis* who were appointed by the *Uparikas* and in rare cases by the emperor himself. The smallest administrative unit was the village and the *Gramyaka* was charged with its administration. The Village council functioned normally and discharged the duties of village defence, settling village disputes, organising works of public utility, and collection of government revenue.

There were various grades of administrative officers like the *Mahaakshapatalika* (Minister in charge of records) *Mahapratihara* (Chamberlain) *Mahadandanayaka* (Judge) etc. The army and its administration were in the charge of the *Mahasenapati* (General) though the supreme mander was always the King. There were seven departments of administration, the most important being, civil, revenue and police, military and judical, pertaining to the central, provincial and local administration. The military department was looked after by the *Mahasandhi-vigrahika* (Minister for peace and war) and it was divided into four corps like infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants and camels.

Fa-Hien who travelled in India and Ceylon during 399-414 A. D. has left us his detailed impressions of the life of the people in the home provinces of the Guptas. In the Middle Kingdom, he says, "the cold and heat are finely tempered, and there is neither hoarfrost nor snow. The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the gain from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporeal punishments. Criminals are simply fined lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances (of each case). Even in cases of repeated attempts to wicked rebellion, they only have their right hands cut off. The King's bodyguards and attendants all have salaries". The dress of the people consisted mainly of turbans, coats, shawls and loose garments which were similar to the modern *dhoti*. In matters of ornaments, earings, necklaces, armlets and anklets were very popular. The coins of the Gupta kings show them dressed in tight-fitting coats, trousers and head-dress, wearing earings and armlets and the queen is dressed in a loose sari and tight-fitting head-dress. Sometimes a shawl-like apparel was hrown loosely over the shoulders.

The existence of a large number of Gupta coins both of gold and silver suggests the economic prosperisy of the country during the age. Crafts and trades were generally organised into guilds as in the olden days but the set up of such guilds had now become more elaborate and complicated. The main source of income for the state was, of course, land revenue for the collection of which a very complicated administration was employed. Land was classed as follows: waste, pasturage, agricultural, etc. and rates of collection varied accordingly. A stable currency backed by the vast resources of the state naturally facilitated extensive trade and commerce. These coins of the Guptas throw a flood of light not only on the political and economic conditions but also illuminate the religious ideas of times. And to these last we shall turn in the next few pages.

X

EXPRESSION OF THE GOLDEN AGE

A horseman type coin of Chandragupta II significantly describes him as *Paramabhagvata*. Several coins of the Archer type belonging to the same king prominently display the wheel of Vishnu. Many coins of Kumargupta I, show the eagle (*garuda*) which is the conventional vehicle (*Vahana*) of Vishnu. All these indications clearly show that many of the Gupta monachs were ardent devotees of the Bhagavata creed or Vaishnavism. The Gupta age was essentially an age of the triumphant revival of Hinduism and Hindu culture. Samudragupta, after his conquests performed the celebrated horse fice, in commemoration of which he issued a special of coins known as the *Ashvamedha* type. The Vaishnava creed, during the Gupta period, had finally emerged as the accepted creed of the masses of people and counted within its folds kings and commoners alike. Vaishnavism, before it reached this status of preeminence; had to go through gradual spread and evolution through many a century and in order to understand its final appearance we must acquaint ourselves with the broad outlines of its previous history.

"The cult of Vasudeva," observes Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, "must have been formed from the same intellectual ferment as produced Buddhism and Jainism but as a religious reform it was on more conservative principles. It repudiated slaughter of animals and the inefficacy of the sacrificed ritual and advocated the path of devotion as the way of salvation. Like Buddhism and Jainism it was a natural reaction against the barren excesses of the ritualism of the *Vedas*. Another important characteristic of the Bhagavat sect was that originally it was a Kshatriya movement professing the principles advocated by a Kshatriya warrior-philosopher. This new religious theory preached by Krishna was adopted by his tribe the Yadavas who had their habitat round Mathura. As it was essentially a religious movement initiated by a Kshatriya and sponsored by the warrior caste it must not have found much favour with the Brahmanas. Indeed, it is highly probable, that they viewed it with much hostile interest but were later on forced to accept it due to the pressure of circumstances, at the time when Brahmanism was threatened by the aggressive spread of Buddhism and Jainism. The former was more dangerous not only did it flout the authority of the Brahmanas and their sacred texts, the *Vedas*, but also did it reject the caste theory and turned towards an ambiguous agnosticism. Hence, to counter the influence of Buddhism, Brahmanism must have made a common cause with Bhagavatism. It is at this time that Vasudeva Krishna was identified with Vishnu. The Buddhist propaganda of castlessness must have provided the prime cause for such an amalgamation. For it is only during the reign of Shungas, that Vasudeva worship flourished in Magadha of which we have evidence in the form of archaeological remains of a Garuda column.

"The priesthood", says Edgerton, "in order to maintain its sacredotal leadership took up Krishna Vasudeva who was a popular deity and identified him with Vishnu, the old Rigvedic solar god." "Brahmanism" Edgerton remarks, "stooped to conquer, it absorbed popular cults which it had not the strength to uproot. The simple and ancient device of identification of one god with another furnished the means to this end."

There are unmistakable traces of the influence of Bhagavatism on Buddhism, especially the later phases of it. The cult of the devotion in stupa worship is clearly due to the influence of Bhagavatism and to the same source is to be attributed the sculptural representation of foot prints of the Buddha.

The Founder: The founder of Bhagavatism, Vasudeva Krishna, was a chieftain and head of the Vrishni, which belonged to the Yadava clan. Krishna was his personal name and Vasudeva his patronymic. He had a brother called Samkarshana. Krishna who was the leader of the Satavata Sept, lived in the 9th century B. C. There is also a reference in the *Upanishads* *tioning Krishna Devakiputra who was a pupil of Ghora* Angirasa. From this it appears that his mother's name was Devaki. According to the *Kalpasutra* (*S.B.E.* XXII p. 246) she woke up on seeing auspicious dreams at the time of conception. Thus we have no real difficulty in accepting Vasudeva Krishna as a historical figure. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar thinks that Krishna and Vasudeva were two distinct individuals in the beginning and later on identified But this view cannot be accepted. As is shown by Raychoudhri, Vasudeva was really Krishna's patronymic and originally Krishna must have been a Kshatriya hero. The pastoral association must have been borrowed from the Rigvedic descriptions of Vishnu, especially after the association of the Abhiras, who were a pastoral tribe.

Krishna Vasudeva: The *identification* of Krishna Vasudeva with Vishnu is an interesting phase in the development of the former as a *Bhagvat* (Lord). Vishnu is quite a minor god in the *Rigveda* but in the Upanishadic period he came to occupy a very prominent position—"highest among gods". Dr. Dandekar has very exhaustively dealt with the problem of the evolution of Krishna *into a* member of the Hindu trinity and we cannot do better than summarize his conclusions.

Vishnu: Vishnu, according to Dr. Dandekar, in the early period must have been connected with vegetation ritual. He had in him certain traces which were abhorred by the vedic Aryans and even though he must have been a popular god of *the masses*, was ignored by the composers of the vedic hymns. In post-vedic times popular religion again came to the forefront and with it Vishnu. In the second century B. C. when Brahmanism made an alliance with Bhagavatism Vishnu had already become the all important god and hence he was promptly identified by the Brahmanas with Krishna Vasudeva. Names like Vishnudatta and Vishnurakshita clearly show that the identity was an established fact in 100 B. C.

The sources of the philosophy of Bhagavatism are to be found in the speculations of the *Upanishads*. The three principal tenets of the creed are Karma, Soul and God. The nature of Karma is much the same as the Buddhist conception of cause and effect but the Bhagavata believe in selfless Karma which in itself is service of the Lord. The conception of soul is enunciated in the *Gita*. Soul is conceived as an eternal, indestructible principle of existence. God is conceived as an all loving God, omnipotent and "being moved by the distress and ignorance of men". The nature of Vasudeva as enunciated in the *Mahabharata* is that he is the supreme soul, the eternal soul of all souls. He is the supreme creator. All living beings are represented by Samkarshana who is a form of Vasudeva. The chief characteristic of the Bhakti cult, which is another name for Bhagavatism, are belief in monotheism, love, admiration and worship of God as the means of salvation. In the second century B. C. the doctrine of Vyuhas was already developed for Patanjali mentions the four Vyuhas of Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The main emphasis of the philosophy of Vaishnavism is as expressed in the *Bhagavadgita* on the doctrine of (Karma). It enunciates some of the noblest Hinduism, the foremost among them being

Prasad (faith and divine grace). While we are speaking about Vaishnavism we may also try to discuss the message of the *Bhagvadgita* which had by now emerged almost into its finalized form. Of all the sacred books of the Hindus there is none so popular, so uniformly beautiful so lofty and so positive in its message, as the *Gita*. By its very nature and scope it epitomizes all that is best in Hindu philosophy and in the process of doing so often has to survey and reconcile contrary views leading to diverse interpretations.

The causes for the tremendous popularity of the *Gita* are many and varied. First of all consider the setting; the mighty Kaurava-Pandava armies are poised for a sanguinary battle. A word from the respective commanders and the legions would be interlocked in a deathlike ferocity. Arjuna then, surveys the field and naturally in the opposite phalanx finds many of his blood relations and revered teachers. This produces in his mind the most spectacular re: action. He reflects, is it proper for him, a warrior, to spill so much fraternal blood just for the selfish motive of enjoying a kingdom? The bow drops from his hand, he turns towards Krishna his charioteer and guide and exclaims in self pity, 'No! I cannot do it!' Then Krishna examines all his doubts and shows him in an unmistakable way the path of his duty. Such is the formal excellence of the *Gita*. Again, take the spirit of toleration that sheds its pleasant aura over the entire composition enlivening its every word and every single modulation of tone. In this there is no rabid denunciation of any mode of thought. All are entirely on their own merits. Arjuna is on the horns of a moral dilemma—should he, as befits a warrior, fight in battle irrespective of whom he strikes down, whether friend, relative or preceptor or should he, considering the selfish motive which goaded him into such a disastrous action, refrain from pulling the string of his bow?

Different Interpretations: Being a dissertation on the problem of finding the correct approach to an incipient action, the *Gita* has naturally to treat with formal approval different modes of thought "All roads", says a proverb, "lead to Rome". "All modes of devotion", says Krishna, "*lead one to communion* with Ishvara" whether it is that of ritualistic devotion or devotion of knowledge or Bhakti." Under the circumstances then, the *Gita* is exctremely liable to a number of diverse interpretations.

Message: But it cannot be gainsaid, that the core of the philosophy of the *Gita* breathes forth the glorious message of *Karma Yoga* or activism. Karma, in this context, is not to be interpreted within the meaning of the word ritual or passive knowledge loosely interpreted. Karma should rather be rendered as devotion to the discharge of social obligation. But devotion here does not imply a means to an end but the end in itself. Your concern, says the *Gita* is solely with action, not with its fruit. *It closely examines* the two ideals of *Nivritti* or renunciation and *Pravritti*, which means an active life, perhaps with selfish interests, and points to the golden mean of action without thought of recompense. That is the message of the *Gita*,—the message of disinterested but positive action.

Samkhya and Yoga. It is possible that the systems of philosophy referred to in the *Gita* emerged in a finalised from in this age, though the ideas belonged to more ancient times. Buddhism, for instance, presupposes, some aspects of Samkhya and Yoga philosophical thought. Be it as it may, we can safely assume that behind the rise of Vaishnavism was its successful contest with the other views of life.

THE SIX SYSTEMS

We will now make an effort to take a brief survey of all such views, the most important being the six systems. The six systems mark the epitome of all ancient Indian thought. The *Vedas* contain the seeds and the *Upanishads* represent the of the striving of the ancient Indian philosopher in search of Truth. The six systems mirror the culmination of his efforts. The systems not only presuppose and draw considerably upon these stores of views and either develop them, as in the case of the Vedanta or openly turning hostile contradict them and build up their own theories like the Samkhya.

Methodology: The one characteristic feature which is uniformly applicable to all the system is their close examination of the possible sources of knowledge or methodology of argumentation (*Pramana*). Generally speaking the *Pramanas* are three: (1) *Pratyaksha* or method of perception (2) *Anumana* or inference (the classical example of which is 'wherever there is smoke there is fire') and (3) *Shabda* or verbal testimony. A little explaination is necessary with respect to the last. *Shabda* or verbal testimony does not mean the phonetic reaction in the psycho-philological sense but in the peculiary Indian context it necessarily means revelation. In other words it means all such literature as is called *Shruti* in contradistinction to *Smiriti*. The *Vedas*, Vedic literature and the *Upanishadas* consitute *Shruti* literature. Hence *Shabda* has been very aptly rendered as systematised tradition which, is tantamount to intuition. But *Shruti* or revelation is not accepted unconditionally for three important factors regulate its use. Firstly, the truths revealed by *Shruti* should not be extra-empirical, i. e., otherwise unattained and unattainable. They must tell us of the unknown through the known. Secondly, what is revealed should not be contradicted by any other *Pramanas* or the content of revelation must be internally coherent and must not be against reason. Thirdly, the revealed truth must appear probable. Not all the systems, however, accept all the three *Pramanas*, some like Samkhya totally disregard revelation as a source of knowledge while Vedanta specially emphasised on its use.

Six Systems: The orthordox systems are six in number namely (1) Nyaya of Gautama, (2) Vaisheshika of Kanada, (3) Samkhya of Kapila. (4) Yoga of Patanjali, (5) Purvamimasa of Jaimini, and (6) Uttaramimamsa or Vedanta of Badaryana. As opposed to these the system of Charvaka, Yogachara and Madhyamika and Jainism are collectively called the six heterodox (*nastika*) systems-like Samakhya and Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika, Purvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa have much in common with each other and hence they are generally paired and treated as one forming a composite whole.

Nyaya: Nyaya is more or less understood to be a system of logic for the Nyaya system treats logic in such an exhaustive manner that its method has ever accepted by the other systems. Its founder is known as Gautama who was nicknamed as Akshapada or eye-footed, i.e., with eyes directed on the feet. The *Nyayasutras* are ascribed to 150 B. C.

Method: The Nyaya system, though generally described as a method of logic is not limited to it and claims to be a complete philosophical system. In this it is only a development of the Vaisheshika system from which it has borrowed its doctrine of atoms, of the origin of the universe and its psychological principles. The Nyaya theory maintains that souls are infinite and eternal, possess definite qualities and only by means of the material organ of thought which they possess are capable of experience and knowledge.

The Nyaya system, however, pays more attention to formal logic than to philosophy. It holds that the sources of knowledge are four; (1) Perception (2) inference (3) analogy and (4) cridible testimoney. Inference again is subdivided into three classes : (1) inference from cause to effect (e.g., the presence of clouds indicates storm), (2) from effect to cause (e.g., the swelling of rivers shows rain in highlands) and (3) conclusion as to something beyond the reach of the senses only to be known in the abstract, when, for instance, the individual senses are made the foundation on which to base a general conception of the instrument of perception. The Nyaya syllogism consists of five parts: (1) Proposition (2) Cause (3) Exemplification (4) Recapitulation of the cause and (5) Conclusion. The best illustration of this is the proposition 'where there is smoke there is fire'

(1) There is fire on the mountain,

(2) For the mountain smokes.

(3) Wherever there is smoke there is fire, e.g., on the hearth in the kitchen,
(4) The mountain smokes,
(5) Therefore there is fire on the mountain.

Vaisheshika: The founder of the Vaisheshika system was known as Kanada (atom-eater) who is supposed to have composed his *sutras* between 200 and 400 A. D. He proposes to teach the true discernment of all that may be known and for that purpose classifies the multifarious things of experience into *dravyas* or substances which are nine in number. They are: (1) Earth (2) Water (3) Fire (4) Air (5) ether (6) time (7) space (8) Soul and (9) organ of thought. These *dravyas* together with their properties constitute the universe. The *dravyas* are not all material and by themselves do not explain the universe for they form only the framework They have various properties and enter into various relations. The system again postulates the following six categories (1) substance (*dravya*) (2) quality (3) movement or action (4) association (5) difference and (6) inherence. But the most important part of Kanada's theory is his doctrine of atoms which he seems to have borrowed from Buddhistic thought. The atoms of earth, water, fire and air, he says, are eternal and uncreated and although they themselves have no extension, their heterogeneous nature is the cause of the extension and visibility of the combinations of atoms. In its view of the universe the system envisages periods of evolution and dissolution when the atoms are grouped and regrouped. Belief in God and permanent soul are a prominent part of the Nyaya Vaisheshika system.

Sankhya: "The origin of the Samkhya philosophy", says Garbe, "must be sought in a reaction against the idealistic monism of the *Upanishadas* and its rise may be attributed to the same district of India as produced *Buddhism.*" Kapila, the founder of the system was a clear and bold thinker who, in opposition to the Upanishadic trend, sought to maintain not unity but variety behind phenomena. He rejected *Brahman* and along with it the existence of God. His is a thoroughly rationalistic system and the name indicates its analytical method. The aim of the system, in common with the others, is a complete liberation from the sufferings of earthly existence. In order to explain the universe Kapila postulates the existence of two uncreated and everlasting entities called *Prakriti* and *Purusha* which differ essentially from each other. *Prakriti*—matter is real while *Purusha*—soul signifies not one but an infinite multitude of individual souls. *Prakriti* is the primitive matter from which the universe is evolved in regular course. *Purusha*—soul is in itself inert but its very presence is responsible to set primitive matter on its way of evolution. Soul is eternally changeable while matter is eternally subject to change. But both have no beginning and no end. Soul is without attributes or qualities, without parts and therefore imperishable, motionless, absolutely inactive and impassive, unaffected by pleasure or pain or any other emotion and completely indifferent to all sensations. Further *Prakriti* has three essential characteristics (*gunas*) called *Satva* (lightness, illumination and joy) *Rajas* (movement, excitation, pain) and *Tamas* (heaviness, obstruction and sloth). These three *gunas* form the substratum of change which is perpetual, but this change is not total and the *gunas* persist.

In their theory of the universe the Samkhyas postulate two periods of motion (1) towards evolution and (2) towards dissolution. These movements are cyclical with alternating periods of evolution and dissolution. The Samkhyas hold that matter is indestructible and soul is perpetual and production is only manifestation of what is already in a latent form. When the equilibrium of the three *gunas* is disturbed the evolution of primitive matter begins. "Unconscious primitive matter" as an effect of the presence of Soul, "then issues from its stable equilibrium and becomes the subject of evolution and matter during the period of the existence of the universe continually brings forth new products. For this process it becomes necessary to assign some cause. The developments and combinations of inert matter which take place unceasingly would be unexplicable if they were not affected by a spiritual principle. This principle is the collective influence of the innumerable individual souls which—themselves incapable of any activity—contemplate, as spectators from all eternity, the movements of matter. It is not by conscious will that the souls exert an influence on matter, but by their mere presence, which in a purely mechanical way excites matter to activity and development, just as the magnet acts on the iron." Hence it will be readily seen that the position of the soul in the Samkhya system is not entirely superfluous for, it also brings into consciousness all such physical forces as would othewise remain purely mechanical and unconscious. The Samkhyas, further believe that every living being possesses whithin the gross material body, which suffers dissolution after death, an inner or subtle body which is formed essentially out of physical organs and the senses. This subtle body accompanies the soul in the cycle of existence from one gross body to another."

"It is not only the basis of metampsychosis and the principle of personal identity in the various existences, but *also* the *vehicle of* personality in this life for in this subtle body all psychical events have their home and origin. The soul, thus brings into consciousness the pain of the body. This pain is determined by want of discrimination which is the result of the fatal *inheritance from the past.*"

Evolution, according to the Samkhya system proceeds in a particular order in which the appearance of the 24 principles *of Prakriti-Mahat-Ahamkara-Manas*-Sensory organs—Motor organs—*Tanmatra-Bhutas* takes a prominent part. . The aim of the system is deliverance which is to be achieved through the proper discriminating knowledge of differentation between souls and matter.

Yoga: Very closely allied to the Samkhya is the philosophy of yoga whose founder was Patanjali and who *is identified by some scholars with* Patanjali the Grammarian *who lived in* 2nd century B. C.. His *Yoga Suras* are ascribed to 450 A. D. by Hermann Jacobi.

The yoga system is generally treated as a branch *of the Samkhpa for it accepts almost all the doctrines* of the latter on cosmology, psychology and physiology. Its doctrine of emancipation is almost the same but it rejects the atheistic spirit of Samkhya and introduces God in the system. This God however, appears to be clearly an afterthought for the idea is only loosely inserted and the action seems due only to please the more orthodox and help spread the system. It also differs in the treatment of the doctrine of absorption as the most effective means for the attainment of the knowledge that secures emancipation.

The God of the Yoga neither creates the universe, nor rewards or punishes and appears only as a particular goal. The divine goal (i. e. God) stands in an eternal and indissoluble relation with the noblest and most refined constituent of matter—*Sattva* and is free from entanglement with the world. The true emphasis of Yoga, however, is on concentration of thought, a centralisation of all the activities of the objects of sense and of thought on *Atman*. For this it lays down the life of asceticism and practice of diverse postures and methods of the control of the physical organs.

Purva Mimamsa: The Purva Mimamsa which also is known as Karma Mimamsa holds that the *Vedas* are eternal and uncreated and their revelations concern only things existing from eternity and are self-evident. Like the Samkhya this system has no place for God. The *Vedas* in the system, do not mean the poetic compilations of the Rigvedic aryans but the ritualistic and liturgical literature of later days. The system is developed in the *Mimasadarshana* of Jaimini and the compilation is ascribed by Jacobi to 200 to 450 A. D.

The aim of the system is to give a correct interpretation of the vedic texts dealing with Brahmanical ritual. Incidentally it also aims to solve all the doubts in the mind of the follower regarding the correct procedure and sequence to be adopted in the performance of the ritual. It also discusses the rewards which accrue *to one who correctly performs* the ceremonies. It classifies the contents of the *Vedas* and in trying to examine all doubts regarding the efficacy of such performances follows a highly developed and logical method consisting of five parts (1) The proposition. (2) the doubts as to its correction (3) the erroneous method of treating the question (4) refutation of the erroneous method by the true argument and (5) the result of the investigation.

The Uttara Mimamsa or the Vedanta: The last of the six orthodox systems is the Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta and which incidently is the most important for *its effect on the trend of Indian philosophy and religion.* Like the Purva Mimamsa it implicitly accepts the authority of revealed literature and further develops and clarifies some of the noblest conceptions of the *Upanishadas.*

While discussing Upanishadic Philosophy we saw how the Upanishadic philosophers almost stumbled upon the epoch-making conception of *Atman-Brahman.* The fundamental idea of the Vedanta is the same and is tersely and beautifully expressed by *Tatavam asi; aham brahma asmi,* that thou art; I am *Brahman.* But the acceptance of the identity of soul with the eternal principle *of creation involves us into many difficulties. If the* identical principle we might ask, is both, then how can we explain the diversity in the world? This difficulty is explained by the conception of *Maya* or ignorance which so effectively conceals the unity in diversity. Enveloped in ignorance the Atman is unable to distinguish between itself the and *upadhis* or limiting conditions like body or physical organs. The *Maya* or illusion involves us in a round of rebirth and is responsible for the misery of existence.

If ignorance or *Maya* is the agency throug which misery makes itself operative and manifest, the opposite of ignorance which is *Vidya* or knowledge should lead us to emancipation. Knowledge, indeed, enables the *Atman* to distinguish itself from the *upadhis* or limiting factors. But knowledge of what ? Evidently knowledge of both the real nature of *Atman* and *Brahman*. The supreme aim of human beings is emancipation which is another name for the cessation of the soul's transmigration. This is brought about by the recognition of the individual self as identical with the Higher Self.

Brahman, the Vedantin tells us, is of two kinds, the lower and the higher and consequently knowledge is also of two types, knowledge of the lower *Brahman* and that of the higher. The higher *Brahman* is attributeless, formless, devoid of distinctions and unconditioned. It is not gross and not subtle, not short and not long and is imperishable and the only thing that can be predicted of it is that it is not non-existent. It is pure Intelligence and Bliss. When attributes are imposed upon it, it becomes the lower *Brahman* and is made so only for the sake of worship. The lower *Brahman* is conceived of in three different ways (1) Pantheistically as the world soul which is all effecting, the vital principle from which all creatures spring and in which all created things are reabsorbed. (2) Psychologically as the principle of the individual soul which abides in the citadel of the body and the lotus of the heart and (3)Theistically as the personal God—*Ishvara* who guides the lives and activities of all created things.

Knowledge, concludes the Vedantin, is the path of salvation. But knowledge is difficult to be achieved and only the exceptionally gifted can know of the higher *Brahman* and thus seek their speedy salvation. But for the common man it is not to be; for him is the lower *Brahman*, worshipping whom he can gradually find his deliverance. For him there is the path of works. It is true that they cannot create knowledge but they aid in destroying the barricades in the way of its acquistion.

Shankara: The best and most remarkable exponent of the Vedanta philosophy was the great Shankaracharya. He seems to have lived in the 8th century A. D., He carried on a dialectical controversy throug the whole of India in vindication of the doctrines of Vedanta and the most famous event in this campaign was the defeat of Mandan Mishra. Shankaracharya established four Mathas at Shringerī, Dwarka, Badrikashram and Puri. A Sannyasin with the title of Shankaracharya is in charge of every Matha. These Mathas are influential centres of Hinduism. Shankara's main works are his commentary on the *Bhagvadgita*, the commentary on the ten principal *Upanishadas*, *Brahmasutra* and *Shankara Bhashya.**

Vedantism had, besides Shankara, who preached Kevaladvaita or pure monism, other brilliant exponents like Ramanuja, (Vishishtadvaita), Madhava (Dvaita), Vallabha, (Shuddhadvaita) and Nimbaratra (Dvaitadvaita).

Charvaka: Of the heterodox systems, the materialist philosophy of Charvaka is the most interesting both by its own exposition of a thorough-going materialism and as an indication of the range of ancient Indian thought. The materials for the study of this system are very

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* His teaching could be summarized in "*Brahm satyam Jagan mithya, Jivo hmaiva naparah.*" *Brahma* or the Supreme Spirit of real World is unreal. idal self is only the Supreme Self and no other.

After having considered in some detail the philosophical implications either presupposed or implied in the religions thought of the age let us now turn towards the more concrete expressions of this golden age of India.

The most remarkable manifestation of the golden age in literature is seen in the works of Kalidasa, the greatest of all Indian poets. Like his other literary compatriots Kalidasa has left us practically no information about himself and hence a mass of legends and fantastic tales have gathered round his name. One such traditional story tells us that the poet was a Brahmana's child. He was left an orphan when he was a child of six months and was brought up by a shepherd. He was a handsome child full of sprightliness and charm. The daughter of the king of Benares was one of the most learned persons of the day and was proud of her learning. The king resolved to marry her only to a man of equal culture and vowed that her hand could be won only by one who could defeat her in a learned disputation. Many poets and scholars tried to win her but were defeated. Conseqnceutly they decided to wreak their vengeance on her by marrying her to a stupid man. And Kalidasa, we are told, was such a stupid one. The disgruntled poets pretended that, he was their *guru* and in a sham discussion the princess was defeated and subsequently married to Kalidasa. But truth came out at last and being upbraided by her Kalidasa prayed to the goddess Kali for divine grace which was duly granted and he thus became a poet. This is what tradition has to say about his life. But from his works we get some small though more definite indications. His works reveal him as a finely cultured and highly talented and learned man. A great traveller, he was gifted with singularly keen powers of searching observation and a sympathetic understanding of the human mind. His knowledge of the sacred lore is extensive and his acquaintance with the customs and manners of the people intimate.

Though the date of Kalidasa is still a matter of controversy everything points to his flourishing in the time of Gupta glory. The allusion to the horse sacrifice in the *Malavikagnimitra* is almost inevitably to be explained as a reminiscence of the performance of that rite by Samudragupta to the glory of his regime. The Vikramaditya, therefore with whom Kalidasa is associated in tradition seems most naturally to be taken as Chandragupta II whose reign may be placed between 376-77 and 415-16 A. D. The picture of the times as drawn by Kalidasa presupposes the existence of economic prosperity and social security which can mainly be associated with a strong imperial power like that of the Guptas.

The works of Kalidasa are seven in number and can be listed in a probable order of composition in the following order (1) *Ritusamhara*, (2) *Meghaduta*, (3) *Kumarasambhava* and (4) *Raghuvamsha* comprise his poetical works while his dramas are (1) *Malavikagnimitra* (2) *Vikramorvashiya* and (3) *Shakuntala*.

In the poem *Ritusamhara* "each of the seasons in reviewed in detail, in the six cantos with 153 stanzas which make up the work. The salient characteristics in nature which mark each are described in loving and graceful detail and the season's meaning for lovers is explained. The glow of the summer Sun is painful even to lovers, but they find consolation in the nights when the heart of the moon is filled with jealousy as it gazes on the loveliness of the maidens, but this is the very time when the wanderer is burned by the fire of separation from his beloved. In the rains, love is suggested by the wild streams which eagerly embrace the tottering trees on their banks as they rush madly to the ocean and by the clouds filled with rain which bend down to kiss the rocks of the mountain peaks. The creepers of autumn are the fair arms of maidens whose white teeth, seen through their red lips, are like the jasmine revealed through the crimson Ashoka flowers. In winter the fate of the *Priyangu* creeper, buffeted by the breeze, is that of the maiden severed from her lover; for whose lover is beside her this is the season of seasons. In the cool season which preludes spring, the fire and the mild rays of the reviving sun are pleasant to lovers, who find the moon-beams cold and the light of the star pale. Spring brings the blossoms of the mango, which are the arrows to be shot from the bow of the god of love to pierce the hearts of maidens." The poem is distinguished by a profound sympathy with the life of nature and an admirable love of describing in pregnant brevity the aspects of Indian scenery and life.

The *Meghaduta*, the best known work of Kalidasa, describes in measured and touching tones the pangs of separation suffeted by a Yaksha who is exiled by Kubera for a year, for neglect of duty. This year of exile he spends at Ramagiri in Central India. In the rainy season he sees a cloud on its northward way and this gives him an idea of sending a message with it to his beloved in Alaka on Mount Kailasa. The Yaksha describes to the cloud the way he should for follow and in inexpressibly beautiful lines the course to Alaka is unfolded. The descriptions of Ujjayini and the Himalayas are incomparable in their beauty, suggestiveness and delicacy of feeling.

The subject of *Kumarasambhava* is indeed a daring one for it describes the events which bring about the marriage of the highest God Shiva to Uma and the birth of Skanda, the war god, who destroys the demon Taraka. The poem contains some brilliant descriptions of the majestic beauty of the Himalayas and the brilliant and touchingly pathetic picture of the lament of Rati for her husband Kama reduced to ashes by Shiva's dreadful glance.

The *Raghuvamsha*—the finest Indian specimen of the Mahakavya narrates the history of the dynasty of the kings of the solar race. This wide theme gives the poet full scope to exercise his power of description; war and the coronation of a king, the choosing of her mate by a young princess at a *Svayamvara*, the marriage rite, the loss of a darling wife and the grief of a bereaved husband, town and country, the seasons, the incidents of a great *digvijaya* the triumphal progress of a king who seeks to conquer the earth, all form occasions for the poetic-skill.

"The Kavya style", says Keith, "unquestionably attains in Kalidasa its highest pitch, for in him the sentiment predominates over the ornaments which serve to enhance it, instead of overwhelming it. Sentiment with him is the soul of poetry, and fond as he is of the beauty due to the use of figures, he refrains from sacrificing his main purpose in the search for effect." The poetry of Kalidasa is the highest expression of the tonal and suggestive capabilities of the Sanskrit language and the depth and intensity of Indian sentiment.

Shunga and Malavika the Vidarbha princess. The *Vikramovashiya* treats the old legend of the love of Pururavas for the celestial nymph Urvashi noted for her beauty and attractive charms. Pururavas rescues Urvashi from a demon and the encounter involves them in a stronge and passionate love. The drama *Shakuntala*, rightly described as the masterpiece of the art of drama, narrates the story of King Dushyanta meeting Shakuntala at her adopted father's hermitage, his marriage with her and later on forgetfulness about her. The play is remarkable for its sentiments of pathos, love and devotion.

While Kalidas represents the zenith of the glory of classical Sankrit literature, Bharavi, who lived towards the end of the golden age shows its period of decaying conventionalism. The subject of his *Kiratarjuniyam* is taken from the *vanaparva* of the *Mahabharata* which tells us how Arjuna secured weapons from Shiva in the guise of a Kirata. The poet has taken a simple tale from the epic and embellished it with epic happenings. But it would be unjust to deny both poetical fancy and forceful diction to Bharavi; the sentiment of heroism is admirably expressed and the descriptions of scenary are often brilliant, at the same time the artificiality of his work is also often painful.

As in the field of literature the golden age also manifested itself in remarkable advances in mathematics, astoronomy, medicine, chemistry, and metallurgy. Mathematicians like Varahamihira and Aryabhata (who gave the most accurate value for π) and doctors like Vaghbhata, lived, worked and brought forth glorious results of their efforts in this age.

But it is in the domain of art that the full maturity of Indian tradition is seen. The age, by its the earth and to the past. The east as well as the west now begin partly to acquire and partly to consolidate features that were destined in the future to turn to a considerable extent into local i.e., ethnical characteristics. The Dekkan, however, makes the body of the rock, the *cradle of portentous qualities.*"

A description of some of the outstanding works of the period, however, will bring out the main characteristics outlined above. Let us take *for instance* a life size composition from Pathari in the Bhopal Agency depicting the nativity of Krishna. Devaki is shown reclining on a couch with the divine baby lying at her side and is watched by five attendants. The sculpture, it must be remembered, has a double significance. One is the religious aspect, for Krishna worship had by now *come much into vogue*, and the other artistic or idealistic. The form in which the mother lies relieved and the child with its wee little arms hardly lifted up like new born buds, the looks of satisfaction and anticipation on the part of the attendants, all these details combine to impart to the work a sense of *spiritul suggestion* and reveal the supreme self-confidence, the imaginative grasp and the visionary sweep of the artist. The beauty and artistic grace of the composition appear to be the more remarkable when we consider the dimensional aspect.

Now we shall take the Buddha image *from* Mathura Museum. The Buddha is shown standing and the skill with which the body is show through the transperent garments is characteristic of the best Gupta sculpture. All Hellenistic influence is purged and the resultant effect is charming.

Probably associated with the same age are the world paintings in the caves at Ajanta in Hyderabad State. The subjects of the pictures are almost exclusively Buddhist. They include numerous figures of the Buddha relating to various incidents in his life and also scenes from the *Jataka* collection. The artists who painted these figures were no novice but were nurtured in the best traditions of Indian art. To them it was a meditation and a symbolization of their innermost spiritual urge. They were of the earth no doubt, and though their ideas are represented by earthly scenes the effect is never earthy. They have the merit of transcending the obvious limitations of space and time and feeling into the spaceless and the timeless. They also reveal a close familiarity with objects of nature and the world. The animal printings bear eloquent testimony to their powers of observation. As an example we would refer to the picture of the fighting bulls. A painting which reveals the suggestive power of the artist's brush at its best is that of the "Dying Princess" so eloquently described by Mr. Griffith. A lady of rank sits on couch leaving her left arm on the pillow and an attendent behind holds her up. A girl in the background places her hand on the breast and looks towards the lady. Another with a sash across her breast weilds the fan, and an old man in white cap looks in at the door, while another sits beside a pillar. In the foreground sit two women and in the apartment are two figures, one with a persian cap has a water vessel and a cap in the mouth of it; the other with negro-like hair, wants something from him. To the right, two female servants sit in a separate compartment." "For pathos and sentiment" says Mr. Griffith, "and the unmistakable way of telling its story, this picture, I consider, cannot be surpassed in the history of art. The dying woman, with drooping head, half closed eyes and languid limbs, reclines on a bed the like of which may be found in any native house of the present day. She is tenderly supported by a female attendant, whilst another with eager gaze is looking into her face and holding the sick woman's arm as if in the act of feeling her pulse. The expression on her face is one of deep anxiety as she seems to realize how soon life will be extinct in the one she loves." Here, there is a comprehensive picturization of a number of feelings. Pathos and anxiety and grief and fear and a sense of the impending doom, all are there, transmuted into the gold of inexpressible beauty by the touch of the artist's self-confident brush.

Many such scenes could be described, still the beauty of Ajanta will not be completely within the grasp of our curious satisfaction for art like this does not aim at satisfaction and pleasure alone but strives to impart a sense of heightened awareness to our emotional perceptibilities and a feeling of consciousness of our inward life.

For the pictures of Ajanta, as Mr. Griffith so aptly puts it, are accomplished in execution, consistant in convention, vivacious and varied in design, full of such evident delight in beautiful form and colour. The workmanship is admirable, long subtle, curves are drawn with great precision in a line of unvarying thickness with one sweep of the brush; the touch is often bold and vigorous, the handling broad, and in some cases the imprints as solid as in the best Pompeian work. The draperies too are thoroughly understood and though the folds may be somewhat conventionally drawn, they express most thoroughly the popularities of the oriental treatment of unsewn cloth.

Such is the art of Ajanta, a veritable embodiment of the spirit of the golden ago of maturity of convention, of synthesis of all that is best, of an unmistakable positivism, and a vastness of compass, both physical and ideological.

XI

A CHALLENGE FROM THE SOUTH

NEVER before in our ancient history a story of a monarch's life has been so authentically thrown into high relief by a narrative and travel book written almost during his own time. So fortunate we are about the story of Harsha and his life can be sketched in such detail that consequently we know much more about Harsha and his time than any other Indian king of ancient days. The sources for the reconstruction of the story of his times are mainly three (a) his life written by the court poet Bana (b) the travels of Hiuen Tsiang and (c) his three inscriptions—the Sonpat Copper Seal, the Banskhera Plate of year 22 of Harsha era (i.e., circa 628 A. D.) and the Madhuban plate of the year 25 or 631 A. D.

Compared to Harsha with his life full of glorious deeds, his military conquests, his cultural activities, his predecessors pale into insignificance. The founder of his dynasty, we are told by Bana, was one Pushpabhuti, a worshipper of Shiva and disciple of a Shaiva saint Bhairavacharya from the Dekkan who received the boon that he would be "the founder of a mighty line of kings". From the Madhuban plate inscription we get the following list of succession :—

Narvardhana—Vajrinidevi
Rajyavardhana—Apsasadevi
Adityavardhana—Mahasenaguptadevi
Prabhakarvardhana—Yashomati.

It is noteworthy that of the four predecessors of Harsha only his father is titled *Maharajadhiraja* signi*fyin a high royal status.* It is clear that Harsha's father Prabhakaravardhan started as a petty chief of a "district called Sthaneshvara in the land of Shrikantha" and by his own exertions became a power in the land. In the course of his struggle for supremacy he must have *overpowered a number of potentates* of adjoinin territories but we have no definite information of it excepting the somewhat suggestive observation by Bana which runs as follows—"He was a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of the Indus land, a troubler of the sleep of Gujarat, a bilious plague to that scent-elephant the lord of Gandhara, a *ruin to the* lawlessness of the Latas, an axe to the creeper of Malwa's glory."

These Vardhanas originally came from Sthaneshwara over which *they ruled and which was their* capital till Harsha shifted the seat of government to Kanauj. The kingdom of Sthaneshwara, according to the Hiuen Tsiang was "about 7000 li in circuit, the capital 20 li or so." "The soil" he further states, "is rich and productive and abounds with grain (cereals). The climate is genial, though hot. The manners of the people are cold and insincere. *The families are rich* and given to excessive luxury. They are much ad*dicted to the use of magical arts anh greatly* honour those of distingutshed ability in other ways. Most of the people follow after worldy gain, a few give themselves to agricultural pursuits; there is a large accumulation here of rare and valuable merhandise from every quarter". The kingdom of Sthaneshwar from this description, though not of gigantic proportions, as fairly prosperous.

Harsha was born in the year 590-1 A. D.) He had one elder brother Rajyavardhana (born 587 A.D.) and a *younger sister* Rajyashri (*born* 594 A. D.). Harsha's maternal uncle, the King of Malva, deputed his son Bhandi to serve as a companion to the young princes. At a later date two more companions Kumaragupta and Madhavagupt, sons of the king of Eastern Malva, were dispatched to the court of Prabhakaravardhana. We do not know much about Harsha's childhood days and education but Bana tells us that he was trained in sword craft, riding horses and archery.

In due course Harsha's sister Rarjyashri was married to Prince Grahavarman, the son of the Maukhari King Avantivarman. The event was celebrated with appropriate pomp and ceremony and Grahavarman set out towards his kingdom with his imperial bride.

in favour of his younger brother Harsha. Harsha, however, prevailed upon him and Rajyavardhana finally assumed charge of the kingdom. But misfortune would afford him no respite for a courier came with the sad tidings that the King of Malva had treacherously attacked his brother-in-law Grahavarman, killed him and what was more his sister Rajyashri was cast into a prison at Kanyakubja like a common brigand's wife with iron fetters clinking round her tender feet. Enraged at this atrocity Rajyavardhana decided to avenge his brother-in-law's death by inflicting a crushing defeat on the King of Malva by advancing against him in wrathful battle. He kept his younger brother Harsha in charge of the administration in the capital and himself rode away accompanied by his minister Bhandi along with a formidable army. The campaign was successful but the end was sad. Rajyavardhana routed the Malva army with ease but was lured into a conference by Shasanka the king of Gauda—the king who destroyed the famous Bodhi tree. Rajyavardhana was caught off his guard and murdered but in the confusion which ensued, his sister Rajhashri was able to make good her escape from the prison into the Vindhya forest. News of this tragic happening duly reached Harsha who swore vengeance on the treacherous Shashanka. He was beseached by his subjects to become the king and he assumed charge of administration and started out on his war of attrition. His ministers goaded him on to fields of conquests and Harsha with his determination steeled with the double object of rescuing his sister Rajyashri and avenging his brother's death advanced against the Malvas. He punished them severely and set out in search of his sister. He was directed to the Vindhya forest, to the hermitage, of a Buddhist monk Divakaramitra. Divakaramitra told him of having seen a lady of royal mein mounting a funeral pyre with the intention of offering herself as *suttee*. Harsha reached her in the nick of time and dissuaded her from her resolve. She begged Harsha to permit her to become a nun but Harsha succeeded in taking her back to the capital.

Harsha now, determined to put an end to all potential troubles, launched himself into a route march of conquest. With a strong army of 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry he started marching eastwards. This campaigning lasted for about six years during the course of which Harsha was defeated but only once and that by Pulakeshin II, the Chalukya monarch. (But Harsha was not really free from trouble for a long time afterwards.)

This king of the Chalukyas—Pulakeshin II—was the most outstanding personality of the period. The Chalukyas were the bitterest adversaries of the Pallavas of Kanchi and claimed to have originally ruled over Ayodhya for a considerable time before they leapt into prominence by about 550 A. D. Pulakeshin I secured for himself a small principality round Vatapipura (Badami) which eventually became his capital. His sons, who succeeded him carried on the tradition of conquest and added to their kingdom large slices of territories in the Konkan, Bellary and Kurnool districts at the cost of the Kadambas. The kingdom thus embraced the whole of the Bombay Presidency with the exception of Sindh, Kathiawar and northern Gujarat.

Pulakeshin I, had two sons, Kirtivarman the elder and Mangalesha the younger. Mangalesha who succeeded Pulakeshin desired to leave the throne to one of his sons but Pulakeshin II pressed his claim and thus a civil war of succession ensued in which Mangalesha was defeated and killed. Pulakeshin II who succeeded him had to face attacks from within and without but his clever generalship enabled him in not only defeating his enemies but considerably enlarging his kingdom also. Hardly had he consolidated his empire than he had to prepare and meet a mighty foe in the person of Harshavardhana.

The causes which led to the Harsha-Pulakeshin conflict are not quite clear. The account by Hiuen Tsiang implies that Harsha's ambition for further conquests must have naturally led him to the war in which he was defeated. The year of the event cannot be placed later than 613 A. D. According to the life Hiuen Tsiang "Shiladityaraja, boasting of his skill and invariable success of his general filled with confidence marched at the head of his troops to contend with this prince (Pulakeshin) but was unable to prevail or subjugate him."

But the military greatness of Pulakeshin II was not confined to his repulsion of the invasion by Harsha. He forced the Latas, the Malawas and the Gurjaras of Northern India to bow before him and the same fate was imposed upon the southern Koshalas and Kalingas. Later on he overran the Vengi country (region between the Krishna and the Godavari) shattered the greatness of the Pallavas and almost invested their capital at Kanchi. Marching further beyond the Kaveri he threatend the Cholas who along with the Kerlas and the Pandyas made friends with him. These victories made him the master not only the whole of India-south of the Vindhyas, but also of large territories to the North of that natural frontier. So great was the fame of this monarch that King Khusru II of Persia exchanged letters and presents with him.

"The disposition of the people" says Hiuen Tsiang "is honest and simple; they are tall of stature and of a stern vindictive character. To their benefactors they are grateful; to their enemies relentless. If asked to help one in distress, they will forget themselves in their haste to render assistance. If they are going to seek revenge, they first give their enemy warning; then each being armed, they attack each other with lances (spears) when one turns to flee, the other pursues him, but they do not kill a man down (a persons who submits). If a general loses a battle, they do not inflict punishment, but present him with woman's clothes, and so he is driven to seek death for himself. The country provides for a band of champions to the number of several hundred. Each time they are about to engage in conflict they intoxicate themselves with wine and then one man with lance in one hand will meet ten thousand and challenge them in fight. If one of these champions meets a man and kills him, the laws of the country do not punish him. Every time they go forth they beat drums before them. Moreover, they inebriate many hundred heads of elephants and taking them out to fight, they themselves first drink their wine, and then rushing forward in mass, they trample everything down, so that no enemy can stand before them." No wonder, then, that Harsha could not conquer these people. About their king the Chinese traveller further says, "The king, in consequence of his possessing these men and elephants, treats his neighbours with contempt. He is of the Kshatriya caste, and his name is Pulakeshi. His plans and undertakings are widespread, and his beneficient action are felt great distance. His subjects obey him submission."

But the glory of Pulakeshin II was as great as it was short lived. Soon after 641 A. D. the Pallavas smitten into shame by him, now mustered sufficient courage and power and led by their king *Narasinhavarman I, defeated* and killed him. They plundered his capital Vatapi and thus ended the career of the victorious Pulakeshin II.

After his conquest of the territories between the Krishna and the Godavari, Pulakeshin II, left his younger brother Yuvaraja Vishnuvardhana in charge of administration. He soon declared himself independant and founded the eastern branch of the Chalukyas. But Vikramaditya I, who succeeded his father Pulakeshin II, soon regained strength, crushed the Pallavas and re-established his suzerainty over the Chalukya empire. He was succeeded by his soon Vikramaditya II, who, with his brother Vijayaditya I, re-conquered the lost portions and consolidated the empire. Vikramaditya III, who followed *next on the throne had to face an invasion by the Arabs who* had succeeded in overrunning, Sindh, Northern Gujarat, Malva and Southern Rajputana and tried to penetrate into the Deccan. They infiltrated into the Lata Province, but were defeated and thrown back by the Chalukya king who thus saved south India from devastation by the Arabs. This was in 712 A. D., but after exactly 41 years (753 A. D.) the Chalukyas had to surrender their hard won and hard maintained supremacy to the power of the Rashtrakutas.

station on the Hotgi Gadag station of the M.S.M. Railway are situated a group of four caves which could be attributed to the period of Mangalesha, the predecessor of Pulakeshin II. The caves generally follow the same pattern in their plan as in other cave architecture but the pillars and capitals show some new characteristics. Of the four caves No. III is "by far the finest of the series and one of the most interesting Brahmanical examples in India. The cave opens on the north and the level of the floor is eight or nine feet above that of the court outside. A narrow platform is built up outside the whole length of the front. In the east end of the verandah is a large figure of Vishnu seated on the body of the great snake Shesha or Ananta, which is thrice coiled round below him, while its heads—five in this instance—are spread out over and round his big *mukuta* or crown, as if to protect it." The other representations in the caves are the *Varaha*, the *Narasimha* and the *Vamana* avataras. In assessing their artistic value Stella Kramrisch says, "The reliefs of the four caves of Badami, too, are of essential importance. When calling to mind the suavity of Sarnath sculpture, grave weight of forces seems gathered in the looming inertia of their full and heavy forces. In Gupta sculptures of the sixth century absorption and bliss of the mind had transmitted to the appearance of face and body a calm that was unearthly yet tender. In the Dekkan however, that absorption is not of the mind only and there is no bliss." The Dekkan sculptures, according to Kramrisch, are a natural development of the trend of the sixth century tradition which lay in the "perfection of visualising transubstantiated from on the basis of knowledge that during the past centuries had derived its strength and increased its technical facilities

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The Chalukya exuberance, however, did not manifest *itself* in *wars* of offence and defence *only* but also adopted some finer channels for expression. The main example of this are the bas reliefs at Badami. Badami or Vatapipura was the capital of the imperial and western Chalukyas and some three miles away from the Badami station on the Hotgi Gadag station of the M.S.M. Railway are situated a group of four caves which could be attributed to the period of Mangalesha, the predecessor of Pulakeshin II. The caves generally follow the same pattern in their plan as in other cave architecture but the pillars and capitals show some new characteristics. Of the four caves No. III is "by far the finest of the series and one of the most interesting Brahmanical examples in India. The cave opens on the north and the level of the floor is eight or nine feet above that of the court outside. A narrow platform is built up outside the whole length of the front. In the east end of the verandah is a large figure of Vishnu seated on the body of the great snake Shesha or Ananta, which is thrice coiled round below him, while its heads—five in this instance—are spread out over and round his big *mukuta* or crown, as if to protect it." The other representations in the caves are the *Varaha*, the *Narasimha* and the *Vamana* avataras. In assessing their artistic value Stella Kramrisch says, "The reliefs of the four caves of Badami, too, are of essential importance. When calling to mind the suavity of Sarnath sculpture, grave weight of forces seems gathered in the looming inertia of their full and heavy forces. In Gupta sculptures of the sixth century absorption and bliss of the mind had transmitted to the appearance of face and body a calm that was unearthly yet tender. In the Dekkan however, that absorption is not of the mind only and there is no bliss." The Dekkan sculptures, according to Kramrisch, are a natural development of the trend of the sixth century tradition which lay in the "perfection of visualising transubstantiated from on the basis of knowledge that during the past centuries had derived its strength and increased its technical facilities *by its inherent kinship with and interpretation of* nature."

A little later in time but closely allied to the sculptures *of Badami are those at Ellora. Superficially they* give an appearance of naturalism but the Ellora "figures *are but creations of a widespread energy that accumulates,* and in its turn tends towards its own dissemination. Contraction or swelling of the modelled parts, therefore, are physiognomically expressive of forces that transcend the limits of the physique." Now sculpture reveals "great dramatic force, and freer movement than in the Gupta period." The tendency is towards increasing elegance and] slenderness of form. The most renowned example of this is the Kailas temple. "This great Shaiva temple is not an interior excavation, like the earlier cave temples, but a model of structural temple, and from the living rocks and standing free from it though sunk, as it were, in the sloping side of the hill from which it has been excavated." The main temple is Shaivite and a relief represents Shiva and Parvati on mount Kailasa.

Other remarkable examples of Shaivite temples are situated at Elephanta near Bombay. The colossal Trimurti, the reliefs representing the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, the dancing Shiva and Shiva *in meditation* are superb examples of a natural art-tradition with centuries *of development behind it. When one* considers the proportional aspects in relation to the *tremendous expressiveness of the countenances one* cannot but observe and feel that the hand of a master *artist is behind them. And he was not only an artist* but a man of deep religious emotions with a forceful [illegible]ive grasp.

But now to return to Harsha. According to the information given by Bana the Kingdom of Harsha's father Prabhakaravardhan was constituted of the territories of Gandhara, the Indus land, the country of the Hunas Malwa, Gurjarai and the land of the Latas, but it is not clear whether these regions were under his direct administration. The conquests of Harsha added valuable parts to the empire which now included the whole of the basin of the Ganges including Nepal, practically the whole region between the Himalayas and the Narmada.

Administration : The king was the ultimate repository of all power, executive, as well as legislative. He was, however, assisted by a council of ministers (*Mantriparishad*). We are furnished with the names of some of Harsha's high ministers. We are told, for instance, that his prime minister was Avanti. Simhanada was his commander-in-chief, Kuntala was the chief officer of his cavalry and Skandagupta commanded his elephant force. There were different kinds and grades of officers like *mahasamanta*. *Maharaja*, *Pramataras* (spiritual councellors) *Rajasthaniyas*, *Kumaramatyas*, *Uparikas* and *Vishayapatis*. The scheme of administration was practically the same as that followed during the Gupta epoch. The salaries were not paid in cash but were given in the form of lands to high officials. The military personnel however, were, as a rule, paid in cash.

The administration of the period, according to Huien Tsiang, "was founded on benign principles." The executive was simple. The families were not entered on registers, and the people were not subjected to forced labour. The private demenses of the crown were divided into four principal parts ; the first was for carrying on the affairs of the state and providing sacrifical offerings: the second for providing subsidies for the ministers and chief officers of the state; the third was for rewarding men of distinguished ability and the fourth for charity to religious bodies, whereby the field of merit was cultivated. Thus the taxes on the people were light and the personal service required of them moderate. Each one kept his own worldly goods in peace, and all tilled the ground for their subsistence. Those who cultivated the royal estates paid a sixth part of the produce as tribute. The merchants engaged in commerce came and went carrying out their transactions. The river passages and the road barriers were open on payment of a small toll. When the public works required it labour was extracted but paid for and the payment was in strict proportion to the work done.

The military guarded the frontiers and went out to chastise the rebels. They mounted guard at night round the palace. The soldiers were levied according to the requirements of the service. They were promised certain payments and were publicly enrolled. The chief soldiers of the country were selected from the bravest of the people and as the sons followed the professions of their fathers, they soon acquired a knowledge of the art of war. They dwelt in garrisons around the palace (during peace), and while on an expedition they marched in the front as an advance guard. There were four divisions of the army: viz., (1) infantry, (2) cavalry (3) the chariots, and (4) the elephants. The elephants were covered with strong armour and their tusks were provided with sharp spears. A leader in a car gave the command whilst two attendants on the right and left drove his chariot, drawn by four horses abreast. The general of the soldiers remained in his chariot. He was surrounded by a file of guards who kept close to to his chariot wheels.

The cavalry spread themselves in the front to resist an attack, and in case of defence they carried orders hither and thither. The infantry by their quick movements contributed to their defence. They carried a long spear, and a great shield, sometimes they held a sword or sabre and advanced to the front.

The life at the court and of the upper classes of society was not rigourously puritanical and occasional periods of festivity and merry-making helped to lend gorgeous colour to the life of the people. The caste system though fully operative by now did not prevent people from mixing freely together whenever occasion demanded it. The status of women was high and dignified and women of higher classes did not live in seclusion and even went in for higher education.

The main pursuit of the general masses of people was agriculture. Rice was the main item of cultivation but ginger, mustard, melons, pumpkins and other edible items also formed an important part of cultivation. The most usual food consisted of rice, wheat, milk, butter, cream, soft sugar, sugar-candy, oil of the mustard-seed and all sorts of cakes made of corn. Fish, mutton, gazalle, and deer were eaten generally fresh but were sometimes salted. Wines of grapes and sugar-cane and other fermented drinks were also liberally imbibed on festive occassions.

Though land revenue formed the bulk of national income, industrial life was not in a backward condition. Industry was organised on the basis of castes and had corporations or guilds of their own. The Brahmanas generally occupied themselves with the spiritual life of the people while the Kshatriyas formed the backbone of the army and the administration. The Vaishyas monopolised inland and foreign trade and Shudras were the agriculturists. The layout of the towns suggested careful town-planning and administration.

The provincial towns and villages were surrounded by wide and high walls. The streets and lanes were tortuous and the roads winding. The stalls were arranged on both sides of the road with appropriate signs. Butchers, fishermen, dancers, executioners, and scavangers and so on had their abodes outside the city.

The hub of urban activity was the market where commodities, both indegenous and foreign were sold and bought. The media of financial transactions were coins both of gold and silver as well as cowries and small pearls. Sea voyages were very common and ships sailed for Ceylon and as far as China. As a consequence of maritime comercial activity numerous cultural contacts were established with distant Sumatra, Java and Malaya.

Crimes of a violent nature were not common but life had become more risky than in the Gupta age. Hiuen Tsiang was several times stopped and robbed while his predecessor Fa Hian had no such unpleasant experiences. Imprisonment was the usual penalty and mutilation of the nose, ears, hands or feet was not rare. Offences of a minor nature were punished with fines which ranged according to the gravity of the offence.

The dress, manners and customs of the people were le. Their clothing, observes Hiuen Tsiang, was not fashioned cloth (but there is evidence that in some cases it was so); they mostly affected fresh white garments and esteemed little those of mixed colour or ornamented. The men would wound their garments round their middle, then gather them under their armpits, and let them fall down across the body hanging to the right. The robes of the women would reach down to the ground and covered their shoulders completely. They wore a little knot of hair on their crowns, and let the rest of their hair fall loose. Some of the men cut off their moustaches, and had other odd customs. On their heads the people wore caps with flower wreathes and jewelled necklaces. Their garments were made of silk and cotton, hemp and wool.

Like his Mauryan predecessor Ashoka, the name of Harshavardhana is more revered for his religious inclination than political conquests. Putting aside his sword after years of active warfare Harsha showed marked leanings towards the pacifist teaching of the Buddha. Thereafter he ceaselessly worked for the furtherance and expansion of his cherished faith and in consequence built many rest houses and stupas. Though a devout Buddhist, Harsha was not a fanatic and votaries of different sects and beliefs were entertained and served with almost equal liberality and courtesy. He built stupas as also temples dedicated to Shiva and the Sun. But the most prominent feature of the religious and intellectual life of the age was the five yearly assembly.

Hiuen Tsiang has left us a detailed description of a religious assembly and the happenings which took place there. A huge pandal accommodating thousands of people was built and Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhi monks. Brahmanas and Jains alike were invited to take part in religious debates. Hinen Tsiang threw a challenge that his theory be proved incorrect in the assembly but was not replied. A plot to set fire to the pandal and possibly an attempt on the life of the King resulted in some Brahmanas being banished to the frontiers of India.

Harsha also instituted five yearly assemblies for distributing charity. Invitations were sent out throughout the empire and to a large concourse gold, silver, pearls and other valuable gifts were given away.

Harsha's administration was that of an enlightened monarch. Being a self-made emperor his dignity and prestige exercised such influence that he was not much bothered by political troubles in his later years. He was a widely travelled king and knew almost all the parts of his empire intimately. This had a very desirable effect on his officers in keeping them alert and efficient and subsequently the tenor of administration was very high. His day was divided into three parts, one of which was entirely devoted to the affairs of the Government and the remaining two to religious and intellectual pursuits. During his long and stable reign lasting upto 648 A. D. he lived as a cultured, energetic and enlightened emperor and left such marks in matters of religioun and literary patronage as to evoke memories of the great Ashoka and Samudra Gupta.

skilled calligraphist as his signature in the last line of the Bansekhera Plate inscription testifies. He had extended his patronage to distinguished authors like Bana the author of his life (*Harshacharita*) and the famous *Kadambari*.

Bana, the author of the *Life of Harsha* and *Kadambari* was the son of Chitrabhanu and Rajyadevi. His mother died young and his father who brought him up died when Bana was fourteen. After his father's death Bana mixed freely with all manner of people and wandered from place to place In the end he received a royal summons through Krishna, brother of Harsha. It was while at the latter's court that he wrote the famous life. In the eight chapters of his book he narrates the story of the life of Harsha beginning with his own life of his youthful days of dissipation and ends the narrative with the rescue of Rajyashri by Harsha. Historically the work is of minial value, though in our paucity of actual records it is something even to have this. But his supplementation in the form of vivid pictures of the army, of the life of the court, of the secretaries and their relations with the Buddhists, the history of the period, is of unestimable value for the internal history during Harsha's days.

The *Kadambari* opens with the story of the mighty king Shudraka reigning at Vidisha on the Vetravati. He once saw a *chandala* girl of matchless beauty who had *come to present him with a parrot. To the astonishment* of the king the parrot told him a strange tale of how his father was killed by a hunter in the forest and how he himself was rescued by Harita, the son of the sage Jabali. This Jabali told the other sages of the story of the

Krishna. The poem is written in an epic strain and displays considerable powers of richness of imagination, some striking verbal effects and good sense and simplicity.

Of a different calibre and inclination was Bhartrihari, the reputed author of the three *Shatakas* (poems containing 100 verses) called the *Shringarashataka*, the *Vairagyashataka* and the *Nitishataka*. It Tsing who followed Hiuen Tsiang in 671 to 695 A. D. tells us of a Bhartrihari, who was a grammarian and author of the *Vakyapadiya*. This Bhartrihari, according to It Tsiang, was very famous throughout the five parts of India, and his excellences were known everywhere. He believed deeply in the three jewels, and diligently meditated on the "twofold nothingness". Having desired to embrace the excellent law he became a homeless priest, but overcome by worldly desires he returned again to the laity. In the same manner he became seven times a priest and seven times returned to the laity. It is highly probable that the traditional story recorded by It Tsing refers to the poet. From his *Shatakas*, however, it does not seem that he was a Buddhist but it is possible that he became one in old age.

Of his three compositions, the *Shringarashataka* stanzas describe the charms of women, their strength in love and the effect of their association, both happy as well as sad. The *Vairagyashataka* points out that life is all a shadow show and the path of bliss lies in realizing the true meaning of life. The *Nitishataka* contains words of advice regarding moral behaviour and how generally to follow the path of rectitude. His poetry, says Keith "exhibits sanskrit to the best advantage. In Bhartrihari each stanza normally can stand by itself and serves to express one idea, be it a sentiment of love, of resignation, or of policy, in complete and finished form. The extraordinary power of compression which Sausktit possesses is seen here at its best. The effect on the mind is that of the perfect whole in which the parts coalesce by inner necessity."

Education in the times of Harsha displayed the same high level activity as literature, learning being both well-spread and intensiveAs. the government honoured learning a considerable imputes was given to it and philosophy and other sciences received encouragement. Harsha himself evinced a keen interest in the progress of learning during his times and in the furtherance of his policy built a great Samgharama at the famous University of Nalanda. He also made provision for the maintenance of students studying at that institution.

This institution was in a very flourishing condition during the times of Harsha. The place Nalanda before it became an educational centre was a rich and prosperous place with which were associated the holy memories of the Buddha. The institution was already established by 100 A. D. and numerous kings and other wealthy patrons helped to maintain there a succession of glorious teacher whose fame had travelled all over the land. The kings of the Gupta dynasty and Harsha contributed in a large measure in making the seat of learning the focus of of intellectual life in ancient India.

The University of Nalanda was more or less on the same lines as its ancient predecessor the University of Taxila which flourished in pre-Buddhist days. It cannot be called a university in the modern accepted sense of the term for no such organization to which the numerous and well known teachers belonged existed. It was rather a centre of learning which attracted students from all over India because of the presence of many learned and renowned teachers there. Different arts and subjects of higher interest were taught there. The students generally stayed with the teacher who not only looked after their instruction in the subjects of their choice but also moulded their character and influenced their manners. The instruction was carried on in the morning and the noon was devoted to recapitulation and discussion by the students among themselves. The teachers had a large number of students (the traditional figure is 500) and were helped in their task by assistant teachers who in their student days were trained by them and had shown signs of great intelligence and aptitude. At the end of the course the students paid the fees of the teachers in cash, usually thousand *panas*. But those who were too poor to pay had to work for the teacher in lieu of their fees. Subjects, like archery, swordcraft, elephant craft, horsemanship and sacred lore were the most popular subjects at the Taxila University.

The University of Nalanda was of a more ambitious nature. It was essentially a teaching university and students were instructed in all the varied branches of learning like the *Vedas*, *Upanishadas*, Samkhya, Vaisheshika as well as the philosophy of Mahayana and other Buddhist sects. Students coming from other centres of learning had to undergo a strict test before they were admitted to Nalanda. The teachers of Nalanda, according to Hiuen Tsiang, were men of the highest ability and talent. "Their distinction" he says, "is very great; at the present time there are many hundreds whose fame has rapidly spread through distant regions. From morning till night they engage in discussion. the old and young mutually help one another." Famous teachers like Dharmapala, Gunamati and Sthiramati, Prabhamitra and Shilabhadra lived and taught at Nalanda. The students who came for higher learning generally stayed there for two or three years. Instruction was carried on in different viharas and Samgharamas which were donated to Nalanda by kings like Kumaragupta and Harsha Indeed such was the fame of the busy intellectual activity of Nalanda that it was truly an international seat of learning.

The University of Nalanda was still functioning in its full glory and a perusal of the caricula adopted and worked out there would give a comprehensive idea of the magnitude of its task and the extension of its effects. Grammar. philology, logic. astronomy were some of the prominent subjects and teachers of nationwide fame lived and taught at this university. *Though Buddhism* was *on* the wane it was still an active force and the number of *monks engaged in study* and teaching as mentioned by Hiuen Tsiang is impressive.

Hiuen Tsiang tells us in great detail about the carriculum followed in the course of education. "To educate and encourage the young" he says "they are first taught (led) to study the book of twelve chapters (*Siddhavastu*). After arriving at the age of seven years and upwards, the young are instructed in the five *vidyas*, *shastras* of great importance. The first is called the elucidation of sounds (*Shabdavidya*); it treats of the arts, mechanics, explains the principles of *yin* and *yang* and the calendar. The third is called the medicinal treatise (*Chikitsavidya*) it embraces formulae for protection, secret charms (the use of) medicinal stones, accepuncture and mugwort.

The fourth *vidya* is called the *Hetuvidya* (science of logic); its name is derived from the character of the work, which relates to the determination of the true and false and reduces to their last terms the definition of right and wrong.

The fifth *vidya* is called the science of the interior (*adhyatmvidya*—philosophy); it relates to the five vehicles, their causes and consequences and the subtle influences of these.

The teachers explain their general sense, and guide their pupils in understanding the words which are difficult. They add lustre to their poor knowledge and stimulate the desponding."

The age was remarkable for its intellectual acuteness, religious toleration, social gaiety and economic prosperity, the guiding force behind all being Harshavardhana of Sthaneshwara.

XII.

THE SOUTHERN INTERLUDE

"SOUTHERN INDIA", says Vincent Smith, "as distinguished from the plateau of the Deccan, from which it is separated by the Krishna (Kistna) and Tungabhadra rivers, has a character of its own, and a history generally independent of that of the rest of India." Early contacts of political or cultural nature were not only hindered by natural barriers but ethnic and linguistic differences also hampered all such efforts. Though the South was to the northerners for a considerable time, political influence does not effectively begin till the of the great Mauryas. The references to southern kingdoms like the Cholas and the Pandyas. in the edicts of Ashoka presuppose the existence of these southern powers for a considerable time in the past but a connected history of the south is difficult on account of the paucity of materials of a definitely historical nature. But the very fact that the kingdoms of the south referred to by Ashoka were independent and that he was keen on being on friendly terms with them suggests that their political power and prestige were not inconsiderable. The Sangam period, which was the Augustan Age of Tamil literature, reveals an era of peace, plenty and prosperity resulting in cultural development of a very high degree. Trade and commerce, both inland and foreign, were in a very flourishing condition and pepper, pearls and beryls from the south were highly prized as commercial commodities in the markets of Europe.

After the decline of Mauryas the Satavahanas established their kingdom in the Andhra countries and the Pallavas of Kanchi began as officers of the Satavahanas and ultimately became kings of the region round Kanchi.

The origin of the Pallavas, like many of the dynasties of ancient India is a matter of controversy among scholars. Various theories are propounded to explain their origin and the theory that held the field till recently was that developed by the late Mr. Venkayya, who described them as of Persian or Parthian origin. Vincent Smith who first sponsored the Persian origin theory later on abandoned it in favour of the indigenous origin of the Pallavas. It is now almost unanimously accepted that the Pallavas were indigenous in origin and "appeared for the first time in the south as a powerful Brahmana (the Gupta) invader to retire," The reign of Vishnu*gopavarman falls within* circa 342-360 A. D.

The reigns of Simhavishnu (circa 580-600 A. D.) and his son and successor Mahendravarman I (circa 600-630 A.D.) form the golden age of the Pallavas. Simhvishnu is said to have defeated the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Kalabhras and the Malavas and consolidated the Pallava hegemony in the south. His religious leanings were towards Vaishnavism and his reign ushered an era of considerable cultural activity.

Mahendravarman I : The reign of Mahendra is memorable (circa 600 to 630 A. D.) in many respects. The Chalukya contemporary of Mahendra was Pulakeshin II who meted out a sound rebuff to the ex*pansionists ambitions of Harshavardhana of* Sthaneshwara. The causes of the conflict between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas are obscure but the *struggle* was both long protracted and bitter. In his battle with Pulakeshin the Pallava king *suffered* a *severe defeat.* It was during his reign that "a real start to excavating *temples out of solid stone*" was given the result of which are the magnificent temples of Mahabalipu*ram. The religious activities of Appar and the* literary efforts of Bharavi in Sanskrit literature synchronis*ed with his reign and the age of peace and prosperity dur*ing which Mahendra ruled, gave considerable impetus to *productions in the fields of* drama, *music, painting* and other arts.

A noteworthy event in the life of Mahendra was his *conversion to Shaivism. He was at first a Jaina and was* afterwards converted to the cult of the *Linga* by the cult of Appar or Tirunavukkariyar, who was first persecuted and then patronised by Mahendravarman I. The two great Shaiva devotees, Appar and Tirunavasambandar, were contemporaries of the two Pallava kings Mahendra and his son Narasimhavarman I.

Shaivism though now comes into great prominence in the history of both the northern and southern parts of India had a tradition reaching back into remote antiquity.

Like Vaishnavism, Shaivism also had become very popular in this age. If the beginnings of Vaishnavism can be traced to as early an age as the Upanishadic times the existence of the cult of Shiva could be linked with the pre-Aryan epoch. The important finds at Mohenjo Daro enable us to form an idea of the religious conceptions of the Indus valley people. We have already described the figure of a deity called the proto-type of the historic Shiva by Sir John Marshal elsewhere and have also referred to the wide prevalence of the phallus-cult in pre-Vedic India. In the Rigvedic period we find that Rudra-precursor of the Puranic Shiva—is regarded with mixed feelings of dread and veneration. But he is altogeher a minor god. He is shown as a god of destruction and at the same time kind and benevolent. Rudra's sons are the Maruts and both the father and his sons are associated with death from very early times. He is also described as the protector of cattle—Pushupa. There is a reference in the *Rig veda* to nude gods indicating the prevalence of phallus worship among non-Aryans. The general conception about Rudra in early Brahmanic literature appears to be that "Rudra was a terrible god and in Rudra-Shaivism the sentiment of fear is at the bottom, however concealed it may have become in certain developments of it, and this sentiment it is that has worked itself out in the formation of Rudra—Shaiva systems of later times."

In the *Mahabharata* Shiva has already become a powerful, wrathful impetuous god, but generous when pleased. His vehicle is the famous Nandi and he is shown as specially fond of Yoga. A necessary adjunct of the Shaiva creed is phallus worship. Today the sect claims adherents generally almost all over India but especially South India is its centre.

After his conversion to Shaivism Mahendra lost no time in giving a new impulse to that religion in the Tamil country by excavating a number of rock cut Shiva temples in the Kanchipuram district. These rock cut temples are evidently in imitation of the Buddhist pattern.

The monuments of Mahabalipuram are remarkable both for their stylistic significance and religious associations. The oldest and most interesting group of these monuments are the so-called five "*rathas*" or monolithic temples standing on the sea shore to the south of the other rock excavations. Four of them stand in a line running from north—north-east to south—south-west and appear to have been carved out of a single rock or stone which must have been between 35 to 40 ft. in height, and one stands a little detached from the rest. Draupadi's *ratha* is a cell 11 ft. square externally and with a curvilinear roof rising to about 18 ft. high. This "*ratha*" is the most completely finished of the five and is now unique of its kind". The Arjuna *ratha* is a copy of the Dharmaraja *ratha*. The Bhima *ratha* is an oblong building measuring 48 ft. by 25 ft. high. The Dharmaraja *ratha* is the finest and most interesting of the group. The three upper stories are ornamented with little simulated cells. The Ganesha *ratha* is situatd at a distance of three quarters of a mile from the others and is a small and singularly elegant temple. It is in three stories with elegant details and shows a form a later known in Dravidian architecture as *Gopuram* or gateways. Of greater interest to us is the clear indication that these *rathas* formed the originals from which all the *vimanas* in southern India were copied, and continued to be copied nearly unchanged to a very late period.

The Kailasnath and Vaikuntha temples at Conjeevaram are other notable examples of Pallava architecture. The former is dedicated to Shiva and faces the east and has a sancturn 9 ft. square enclosed by massive stone walls 6 ft. thick. Enshrined within is a huge sixteen-sided black stone *linga* about 6 ft. in height and 3 ft. in diameter. Around the sanctury is a narrow circumbulatory passage with a fight of steps on the south side leading upto the first floor. In front is a portico flanked by two small shrines, one on each side of the entrance. As the sanctury and passage are covered by the flat roof or terrace above on which stands the pyramidal tower of the temple the interior is in total darkness. The exterior walls of the Shiva chamber are provided with no less than nine small attendant shrines. The pyramidal tower over the central shrine is divided with no less than nine small attendant shrines. The pyramidal tower over the central shrine is divided into three main stories rising to a total height of about 50 ft. and is crowned with the usual umbrella ornament surmounted by an urn-finial.

In the development of Pallava architecture four distinct styles corresponding to the periods of the four kings Mahendra (610 to 640 A. D.) Mamalla, (640 to 674 A. D.) Rajasimha (674 to 800 A. D.) and Nandivarman (800 to 900 A. D.) are to be seen. Of the first style the monuments are "the subterranean rock cut excavations known as cave temples. They have one *external facade which is in the face of the rocks.* The plan is simple consisting of a rectangular pillared hall with a small shirne-chamber excavated in one of the side walls. These temples are characterised by the type of pillar found in them. The pillars are 2 ft. square in sectien and 7 ft. in height. The upper and lower portions are cubical while the middle portion of the shaft has the angles levelled off, which makes the middle third octagonal in section. Sometimes the cubical portions *are decorated with a* conventional lotus flower design similar to the lotus medallions appearing on the stone rails of the Amaravati Stupa. The capitals of the pillars are simple corbels or brackets supporting the architrave above. The lower or underside of the bracket is rounded upwards and sometimes decorated with horizontal rows of ornament."

To the second or Mamalla *style* belong cave temples, *rathas* and rock temples. The most striking *feature is the curious shape of the pillars. They are now* more elegant and better proportioned. At the base is the conventional lion supporting the shaft of the column on its head. Between the capital and the architrave is a double bracket supporting the cornice. The seven pagodas are a notable example of this style of architecture.

The *third* or Rajasimha *style introduces* a *new trend* in the history of south Inniah architecture. New structural buildings come into vogue. They are built of stone sometimes accompanied by a brick superstructure covered in plaster and decorated in instances. The central shrine is covered with a lofty tower rising in tiers which diminish in size as they approach the summit. The prominent example of this style is the Kailasnath temple at Canjeevaram.

The fourth of Nandivarman style carries the tendencies of the Mamalla period into further elaboration. The gable-window ornament and absence of the conventional lions are some of its characteristic feature.

But the most interesting and remarkable group of sculptures of this period are the statues of Simhavishnu and Mahendravarman carved in a panel in a rock cut temple at Mahabalipuram. The first one is of Simhavishnu with his two queens on either side and the other shows Mahendravarman with his left hand holding the right hand of one of his queens. Pointing out the salient characteristics of Pallava architecture, Kramrisch says, "Most of the other rock cut reliefs of Mamallapuram are architectonic in their structure. Whether they represent Vishnuitic myths and Shaivaitic divinities or the royalty, the rectangular frame is the key note of the composition. Where single figures are made to fill sunk panels on the *rathas* (rock cut temples) their extraordinary height is one with that of the shafts of the fillasters that flank those panels. But not only is the the remarkable elongation of the figures in keeping with architectonic devices. Their postures too, whatever bend the body may assume, have more of the swaying loftiness of Aryavarta figures. The vertical direction remains predominant and bases its slimness on the shallow eaves which cling to the tall limbs and make them smooth. And further unbounded mass is suggested by the relation of the figures towards it, has paradoxically enough architechtonic discipline for its co-relation. This antithesis of the suggested unbounded and the neatly defined and disciplined gives but two *essential* aspects of one and the same reality.''

The reign of Mahendra saw considerable activity in the fields of architecture, painting and literature. The work *Mattavilasiniprahasana* throws a revealing light on the cultural conditions of the age. The Buddhist and Jain religions were declining in strength and Vaishnavism and Shaivism receiving royal support had assumed greater strength and vigour. The temples of Mahabalipuram bear *eloquent testimony to the architectual* aptitude of the monarch and serve to indicate and final forging of cultural unity between the north and the south.

The Pallavas, says Dr. Krishnarao, have a very important place in the history of ancient India. They were the counter *part of the* Imperial Guptas and Vakatakas, in the south. They were the earliest dynasty who *introduced* Sanskrit in the south; like the Imperial Guptas the Pallavas described themselves as *Paramabhagavatas* and established Vishnuism as the state religion. They beautified the south with sculpture and architecture and their capital became one of the seven holy cities of India.

THE KADAMBAS

The Kadambas who ruled over the present districts of Belgaum, Dharwar, *North Kanara* and *the* northwestern parts of Mysore were the political contemporaries of the Pallavas. *They* were Brahmanas of the Manavya *gotra* and claimed northern origin.

Mayurasharman the founder of the dynasty being insulted by the offensive behaviour of some Pallava horsemen with whom he was involved in a sharp quarrel, decided to avenge himself. He, then, after having duly trained himself in the art of war overpowered the frontier guards and established himself in the forests of Shriparvata (Shrishailam, Karnul district). The Pallavas tried to chastise him for his audacity, but later on made a compact with him by which he entered into their service. His valour and dignified bearing so pleased the Pallava king that he was rewarded with suzerainty of the Premara (Malwa) country.

The rule of the Kadambas reached its acme during the reign of Kakusthavarman. He was a distinguished warrior and the country over which he ruled so efficiently was peaceful and prosperous. During his reign the Kadambas, as a political power became so important that Narendrasena, the Vakataka king thought it fit to contract a matrimonial alliance with a daughter of Kakusthavarman and a second daughter of his was married to a Gupta king. During the 4th and 6th centuries A. D. the Kadamba rule was at its highest but succumbed before the onslaught of the Chalukyas in the middle of the sixth century A. D.

Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas: The three South Indian kingdoms of Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyas are of great antiquity and references to them in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* can be found describing them and their propartions. Ashoka in his edicts refers to them in such terms as to suggest positions of importance and power. But the sources for the reconstruction of their history being what they are, any attempt to do so is beset with considerable difficulties. All the three kingdoms involved Arjuna in a fight in which Wang-Hiuen T'se was helped by Tibetan troops. Severe defeat was inflicted upon Arjuna and the Chinese occupied some parts of India. In the absence of any further corroborative material the historicity of the story is always open to question but it serves well to indicate the wide prevalence of chaos in political conditions following Harsha's death.

Yashovarman: But once again after Harsha's death Kanauj in the 8th century A.D. leapt into political prominence with the reign of Yashovarman. He, it appears, was of the same type as Yashodharman and Shashanka, a seeker of political fortune and succeeded in establishing his power at Kanauj. His reign is memorable for his literary patronage to Bhavabhuti, the great Sanskrit poet who lived at his court.

It was during the reign of Yashovarman that Bhavabhuti, the Sanskrit dramatist, lived and wrote his three plays *Mahaviracharitam*, *Malatimadhava* and *Uttararamacharitram*. Bhavabhuti came of the Udumbara family from the city of Padmapura. He was well versed in grammar, rhetoric, logic *Vedas*, *Upanishadas*, Samkhya and Yoga. In his early life, he like his predecessor Bana, was very friendly with actors who may have influence him in turning to the stage. For them he wrote prologues for the plays written by others but after some time succeeded in having his own plays staged by his friends.

In his *Mahaviracharita*, Bhavabhuti dramatises the early part of the life of Rama. The piece opens shortly before the hero's marriage and the story is taken up through his exile, the abduction of Sita and her rescue were engaged in internecine warfare and thus their territorial dimensions were frequently subjected to drastic alteration. Of the three the Cholas were no doubt the most powerful and important. The first historical Chola ruler was Karikal who succeeded to the throne when quite young and was an heir to the kingdom not in the enjoyment of peace. He is credited with having made embankments for the Kaveri river and under him the kingdom reached new heights of glory. He had to fight the confederacy of Chera and Pandya chiefs which resulted in subsequent Chera-Chola friendship. But undoubtedly Rajaraja (the Great) was the greatest of the monarchs of his time; who with his numerous wars and extensive conquests made his kingdom the most powerful in south India. He succeeded to the throne in 985 A. D. and had first to put an end to dynastic intrigues. In his busy reign of 28 years he passed from victory to victory and at his death he was indisputably the Lord Paramount of Southern India ruling a realm which included nearly the whole of the Madras Presidency, Ceylon and a large part of Mysore.

XIII.

THE LAST DAYS

THE history of the times immediately following the death of the great Harshavardhana is still shrouded in considerable darkness. He, it appears, and there are good grounds to believe, died heirless and subsequently a minister of his, named Arjuna, or Arunashva usurped his throne. This Arjuna, we are told by some Chinese books, robbed a mission headed by a Wang-Hiuen-T'se which reached India shortly after Harsha's death. This involved Arjuna in a fight in which Wang-Hiuen T'se was helped by Tibetan troops. Severe defeat was inflicted upon Arjuna and the Chinese occupied some parts of India. In the absence of any further corroborative material the historicity of the story is always open to question but it serves well to indicate the wide prevalence of chaos in political conditions following Harsha's death.

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In his *Mahaviracharita*, Bhavabhuti dramatises the early part of the life of Rama. The piece opens shortly before the hero's marriage and the story is taken up through his exile, the abduction of, Sita and her rescue and ends with Rama's return from Lanka and his subsequent coronation. The skill of the dramatist can easily be judged by the unified character he had imparted to the plot by reducing a large number of apparently diverse incidents into a harmonious story with a basically good characterisation which however, through the presentation of fully developed characters instead of passing through a process of development, appears in certain places stiff and unconvincing.

His *Malatimadhava* is more ambitious in design. The story centres round four main characters, Bhurivasu and Devarata and Malati and Madhava. Bhurivasu and Devarata, two great friends, decide while studying at a university to maintain their close friendship by marrying their son or daughter to each other. Later on Bhurivasu becomes a minister to the king of Padmavati and has a daughter named Malati. Devarata becomes a minister of Kundinpura in the Berars and has a son called Madhava. But the friend's plan is threatened with frustration when the king of Padmavati desires Malati to be married to his court favourite Nandana. This difficulty obviated through the good offices of Kamanandki a fellow student of the parents. She so arranges a meeting between Malati and Madhava at a festival that they fall in love with each other, and as such the king could not find fault with Bhurivasu. That is the main plot. And this is intersticed with subplots and several episodic elements. The plot as it stands is a loose patch-work and lacks the consistency, the inevitableness, that should belong to every dramatic action. But it also shows the dramatist's power of inventing and his sense of the dramatic. It is sentimental in tone and its language reveals a fine command over the finer shades of meaning and their proper use.

it represents the best elements of the influences of Gandhara art. "Except for its quasi-classic pilasters", says Havell, "the design of the Martanda temple confirms strictly to the Hindu tradition of the time." In its finished form it must have been an imposing structure boldly planned and artistically executed.

But the story of the two centuries from the close of the 8th century to 1000 A. D. is essentially the history of the rise of the three great kingdoms of the Rashtrakutas, the Palas of Bengal and the Gurjara Pratiharas. These three dynasties jointly and severally influenced the destiny of India during the most critical period of her history.

The history of the ninth and tenth centuries A. D. is essentially the history of the tripartite struggle for power between the Rashtrakutas, the Gurjara-Pratiharas, and the Palas of Bengal. The political set-up in Northern India was in a very fluid state and territorial demarcation of different kingdoms subject to violent fluctuations. The once powerful Chalukyas ruled in the Dekkan but due to their protercted hereditory struggle with the Pallavas of Kanchi, their strength was now definitely on the decline. In the East Koshala ruled Udayana and in Rajputana and Malwa ruled the Gurjaras with their centres at Bhimam and Ujjain. But they along with the Maitrakas of Vallabhi were constantly harassed by the Arabs. Gopala I was trying to consolidate his kingdom of Bengal which had just emerged from anarchy. In such conditions rose Dantidurga, the founder of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. He exploited the circumstances to his best advantage and built up a kingdom which soon became an imperial power. The predecessors of Dantidurga must have been ruling in feudatory capacity somewhere in the central or western portions of Central India or more precisely in Berar. The family of the Rashtrakutas came of the Canarese stock and spoke its mother tongue Canarese. Dantidurga began his career by attacking his neighbours in Koshala and Shrivardhana and by extensive manoeuvres and bold generalship he defeated the rulers of Kanchi, Kalinga, Shrishaila Malwa, Lata, Tanka and Sind. Later on in alliance with Nandivardhana the Pallava ruler, he attacked the Gurjaras of Broach and the Chalukyas of the Gujarat branch and annexed portions of their dominions. Dantidurga was a leader gifted with political insight and possessed of great organising capacity. His empire, which he alone built up, included southern Gujarat, Khandesh, Berar and Northern Maharashtra. He was an orthodox Hindu and gave large charities to the Brahmanas. He died not long after 754 A. D. and was succeeded by his uncle Krishna I, who continued his policy of expansion. Krishna I, made further additions to the Rashtrakuta empire by successfully attacking the Chalukyas and annexing Konkan, Carnatak and the major portions of the present Hyderabad State.

Krishna I was succeeded by his eldest son Govind II in *circa* 772-773 A. D. This king distinguished himself more in a life of pleasure and vice than in battle and conquest. He was subsequently overthrown by his younger brother Dhruva in 780 A. D.

When Dhruva came upon the throne he was fifty years old. But age does not seem to have impaired his military ability or damped his imperial ambition. He first attacked the Ganga chief, Shivamara, defeated and imprisoned him and annexed his kingdom, This Shivamara, seems to have allied himself against D
war of succession which he had to fight to

predecessor–his elder brother Govinda II. Then he turned against those Chiefs of Talawad, Kanchi, Vengi and Malwa who displayed disloyal tendencies during the troublesome days. He overran the Pallava Kingdom and almost beseiged the capital of Kanchi. Then he turned northwards and defeated Vatsaraja, the Gurjara Pratihara chief, possibly with a view to helping Dharmapala of Bengal in 789 A. D. But Dharmapala proved to be his next victim, who was eventually defeated. The reign of Dhruva marks the high water mark of the glory of the Rashtrakutas for, in his short reign of 13 years (780 to 793 A. D.), he not only re-established Rashtrakuta hegemony but also made it an all-India power.

Dhruva selected Govinda III among his sons and possibly abdicated in his favour. Soon after Dhruva's death Govinda III was involved in a war of succession with his brother Stambha whom he soon defeated. He reduced all the important kings to the South of the Narmada and turned his attention to Dharmapala of Bengal and his *protege* Chakrayudha both of whom he humbled. In 806-807 A. D. he decided to match his strength against Nagabhata II, the successor of Vatsaraja on the Gujrat Pratihara throne and started on an expedition which was boldly planned and brilliantly executed. In this campaign he was eminently successful and his armies marched right upto the Himalayan ranges.

columns in their long marches literarily embraced all the territories between the Himalayas and Cape Camorin.

Govinda III died in 814 A. D. and was succeeded by the six year old son Amoghavarsha. Amogha's reign in its early part was beset with considerable difficulties. The feudatory chiefs rebelled and dissension was widespread. His cousins who were feudatory chiefs of the Gujarat territories declared themselves independent and founded a branch line there. Amogha was peaceful by disposition and the arts of peace naturally received great encouragement during his reign. Though he succeeded in stabilising his kingdom, in the end, the power of the Rashtrakutas was now definitely on the decline. The later Rashtrakuta kings were continuously engaged with the Gurjara-Pratihara chiefs in wars of mutual exhaustion. The Parmaras were also gradually rising in power and prestige and the Rashtrakutas had to contend with them for their very existence. Internal dissensions and external conflicts in course of time so exhausted the Rashtrakutas that for all practical purposes their power came to an end by 948 A. D.

The achievements of the Rashtrakutas were as remarkable in the political field as they were glorious in the cultural sphere. The Kailasa temple at Ellora described by Havell as in some ways the most wonderful *tour de force* achieved by Indian sculptor architects was built by Krishna I to glorify his patron deity and commemorate his victories. "Technically" says Havell, "the Kailasa temple is almost unique among the great rock-cut monuments of India, for instead of making a horizontal excavation into a hill side, as was the case at Ajanta or carving detached masses of rock as at Mamalla predecessor–his elder brother Govinda II. Then he turned against those Chiefs of Talawad, Kanchi, *Vengi and* Malwa who displayed disloyal tendencies during the troublesome days. He overran the Pallava Kingdom and almost beseiged the capital of Kanchi. Then he turned northwards and defeated Vatsaraja, the Gurjara Pratihara chief, possibly with a view to helping Dharmapala of Bengal in 789 A. D. But Dharmapala proved to be his next victim, who was eventually *defeated*. The reign of Dhruva marks the high water mark of the glory of the Rashtrakutas for, in his short reign of *13 years (780 to 793 A. D.)*, he not only re-established Rashtrakuta hegemony but also made it an all-India power.

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The Palas of Bengal: In the early part of the 8th century A. D. Bengal was so much immersed in anarchy *that the people elected one Gopala I to be their ruler to* save them from the dire effects of internecine conflicts. When Gopala I came to the throne in *750* A. D. he was an elderly man. He was married to Dadda Devi and enjoyed a very short reign. He was succeeded by Dharmapala who was the real founder of the greatness of the dynasty. During his long reign Dharmapala made himself the master of Northern India and his influence reached as far as Kashmir. Dharmapala was a Buddhist but his *Buddhism must have had very little resemblance to* what Gautama, the Buddha preached. Dharmapala was succeeded by his son Devapala, whose rule covered the major portion of the 9th century A. D. During his reign the kingdom of Assam and Kalinga were annexed to the [illegible] The dynasty continued its rule under Mahipala (*circa* 678-1030 A. D.) who was attacked by Rajendra Chola in about 1023 A. D. The Palas of Bengal were constantly engaged in warfare with the Rashtrakutas and the Gurjara Pratiharas and as such their power had only a local significance.

During the age of the Palas of Bengal Mahayana Buddhism (especially tantric worship) flourished with considerable vigour and it is not surprising that art received both direct and indirect impetus from them. Some images of Buddhist divinities could even now be found scattered in Bihar, Orissa and Bengal but many must have dissappeared into total destruction due to vandalism. Of the existing specimen an image of Vishnu found in the ancient city of Mahasthana combines a mysterious sense of vitality, perfect simplicity and restraint of setting and attractive scheme of decoration. But the general tendency is towards a formal crudeness and florid ornamentation generally reflecting the fibre of the age.

The Gurjara Pratiharas: The origin of the Gurjara Pratiharas is shrouded in mystery and as yet is a topic of controversy. According to M. R. Halder, the Imperial Pratiharas of Kanauj derived their family name from the office of a Pratihara or door-keeper and not from the name of their Primeval man like the Chandellas and others. (*Indian Antiquary*, Vol. LVII. pp. 181-189). The most widely accepted theory, however, describes them as a people of central Asian origin. They invaded India soon after the Hunas and first settled in the Punjab. This was in the early years of the 6th century A. D. when they established kingdoms and palities in various places. During the times of by the Rashtrakuta King Indra III but the fortunes were soon retrieved. Mahipala died in 931 A. D. and was succeeded by his three sons Mahendrapala II, Devapala and Vijayapala During this time the Pratihara Empire was menaced by the Chandellas of Jejaka Khukti (Bundelkhand) who by 954 A. D. extended their power upto the Jamuna in the north and Gwalior in the northwest. Following their example the Kalachuris, an ancient family with their history dating back to 3rd century A. D. but feudatory to the Pratiharas, now established an independent principality. Thus in the last quarter of the 10th century A. D. the disintegration of Pratihara rule was almost reaching its final phase. The repeated raids of Sultan Mahamud of Ghazni and the devastation consequent upon such raids finished the work which was started by wars of mutual attrition fought by Indian kings among themselves. These raids exhausted the economic and military resources of the country and opened the golden gates of India to a flood of foreign invaders.

XIV

IN LIGHTER MOMENTS

IN the foregoing pages we made an attempt to learn the history of political events in the story of Ancient India. This represented the life of the people in the serious task of war and territorial acquisitions and empire building and government. Incidentally we also tried to understand the meaning of the varied monumental legacy left to us by our ancestors in the dim and distant past. But their's indeed would have been a poor life, if as the poet W. H. *Davies says*—they had no "time to stand and stare", smile and laugh, clap and applaud, rail and banter, see puppet shows and dramas. In short, no account of their life would be complete without a reference as to how the spent their leisure hours.

The commonest occasion of social festivity was the *Samajja*. At such festivals dancing, singing, music, recitations, conjuring tricks and acrobatic shows were much in prominence as items of entertainment. On such occasions the man of fashion would deck himself in all finery. Vatsyayana in his *Kamasutra* has given us a detailed description of a *nagarika's* (citizen) toilet. "*After getting up and cleaning up his mouth and teeth the dandy proceeds with his toilet.* The first article in this toilet is the *anulepana*, a fragrant ointment ordinarily made of fine sandalwood paste, or of preparations of a variety of sweet smelling substances. He applies suitable quality of this ointment to his person. He then scents his clothes in the sweet smelling smoke of incense thrown into the fire and wears a garland on the head, or hangs it round his neck. He applies collyrium made of various substances to his eyes. To his lips, already reddened by the betel he has chewed, he applies *alatkaka* (a red drug made from lac) to impart a deeper crimson to them and then rubs them over with wax to make the dye fast. Then he looks at himself in glass, chews spiced betel leaves to perfume his mouth and thus decked out sallies forth." By the time he reaches the fair ground, it is fairly lively and buzzing with activity. Perhaps in one corner stands the master acrobat, beating a gong to collect a crowd before he starts performing his tricks. [illegible] us pause and see what he has to show. In small groups of twos and threes, the spectators are assembled. Now the master acrobat digs all over the ground, removes all irritating stones, pebbles and fragments of broken pottery and makes the ground smooth and soft. This done he challenges his mate to a bout of wrestling. The bout starts with spectors now clapping, now sighing. From some other corner of the fair waft strains of music. Perhaps a skilled musician is displaying his art. There he sits with the seven stringed *vina* in hand singing a song of a lover joyously expecting the arrival of his lady love; or perhaps he is singing about the valorous deeds of an ancient hero on forgotten fields of deathly battle ? The drum gives him accompaniment and the tom-tom and cymbals lend voice and sound to past deeds. Just opposite to him is, perhaps, a touring theatrical company. A dance-ballet highlighting some exalted and virtuous deed is in progress. Then on the other side, may be, sits the astrologer, ready to tell your future by interpreting omens, dreams and signs, ready to foretell eclipses, and ready for prognostications from the flight of comets, the thunderings of gods, the junction of planets, the fall of meteors, earthquakes, conflagrations, signs in the heavens and on the earth. He tells you about wealth and happiness and kings.

Talking about kings let us see what is happening on a festive day like this in the royal palace. Perhaps a drama by a far-renowned master ! Perhaps the *Mricchakatika* of Shudraka will be on the stage soon. The spacious royal theatre measuring 96 ft. square is being got ready. The auditorium is in one constant hum. The king has his throne arranged in the centre and the stage bustles with activity. In the green room are seen actors and actresses getting ready for their roles of Aryaka and

King Palaka, Samsthanaka and Vasantasena, Charudatta and Sharvilaka. Soon in a matter of hours Aryaka will be *imprisoned by the order* of King Palaka because he is afraid of a prophecy that a shepherd's house will overthrow his dynasty. Samsthanaka will molest the charming Vasantasena who will take refuge in Charudatta's house. He will agree to keep in his custody her jewels and escort her back home. In the meanwhile Sharvilaka will break into the poor Brahmana's house and *decamp with the jewels. Then Charudatta, for fear of* being laughed at if he said that he was robbed of the jewels, will pretend that he gambled them away and in return will give the lady his wife's only ornament—an old fashioned necklaae. Sharvilaka, in great joy, will tell his ladylove of his successful theft for her liberty but she will turn him away and return the stolen goods *to her mistress Vasantasena who overhears the conver*sation. Now she is so pleased with Charudatta's behaviour that gradually she will fall in love with Charudatta and eventually marry him after surmounting many an obstacle.

As the tale develops the critical audience is now wild at Samasthanaka's behaviour and now sympathetic towards the poor Charudatta. Every incident, every *movement, every gesture, every scene* and every act is keenly followed, applauded, criticised on its merits or *faults.*

The above sketch may well apply to the theatre and the dramas produced in ancient India. The king was the supreme patron of all the fine arts but theatres besides the one in the palace were not non-existent. Bharata, in his *Natyashastra* gives detailed instructions of theatres of different dimensions. Bharata classifies theatres into three groups; the first "where gods and angels figured" and where there was a frequent use of large musical instruments together with such movement on the stage. The medium size is that which is recommended specially.

"The standard theatre was a rectangular building 96 ft. in length and 48 ft. in breadth, subdivided into two equal divisons, viz. (a) the auditorium and (b) the stage. The auditorium was 48 ft. square, the front stage 12 by 24 ft. the back stoge 12 by 48 ft. and the green room 24 by 48 ft. The front stage and the back stage together formed the full stage. On both sides on the front stage were wings facilitating the entry and exit of the actors." The theatre should be properly decorated, says Bharata. "The front part of the stage ought to be built of wood and should be richly decorated with wooden carvings of waterpots, flags and images of damsels. It should also be hung with garlands and turnished with ornamental arches. The lower end of the stage must be white, plastered and rendered smooth, and the platform must on no account be slippery. For the background of the stage, six wooden blocks were to be erected. The intermediate space was to be filled with very fine black earth, in the shape of the back of a tortoise. This earth should have the lustre of a pure mirror and it should be studded with emeralds, sapphires, corals and other jewels arranged in various designs on all the four sides. In the centre of this back wall and on all the walls of the theatre, pictures of lions, elephants, caves, mountains, cities, flower-groves etc. were to be painted."

"The seats in the auditorium were to be arranged in the manner of a ladder, to ensure visibility. They were to be made of wood and bricks 1½ ft. higher than the ground; on these seats people squatted."

On a stage of such dimensions and decorations performed actors who were carefully trained in the art of a smooth and melifluous verbal delivery accompanied by natural and appropriate gestures. According to the *Natyadarpana* "the three elements of bodily gesture are the limbs, parts of the body and features. In *angabhinaya* the head, hands, arm-pits, sides waist and feet, these six, and some say also the neck, are called the limbs. In the *pratyangabhinaya* the shoulders, shoulder-blades, arms, back, stomach, thighs and calves, some say also three others, the wrists, knees and elbows, are the parts of the body. In *upangabhinaya*, the eyes, eyelids, pupils, cheeks, nose, jaw, the lips, teeth, tongue, chin, face, these eleven are the features. Besides these are the accessories, such as the heel, ankle, fingers, and toes and palms." By an appropriate and clever employment of all these parts the artist strove to create an atmosphere of intense suggestion and feeling.

A similar form of popular entertainment was the puppet show. The puppets were carved out of wood, dressed in appropriate apparel and animated with the help of strings. A narrator would simulate the voices of the characters and also narrate the background story of the incident. Many a time, besides, parties of performers would represent historic incidents of bygone days or mythological tales of a hoary antiquity at the fairs.

Gambling was a necessary adjunct to such festivals and was generally done with dice. The *Payasi Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* tells us of a story of two gamesters.

Once upon a time, so goes the story, "two gamesters were playing with dice. One gamester swallowed as it came each adverse die. The other gamester saw him do this and said, "look here, friend, you have won outright; give me the dice; I will make a votive offering of them." "Good, friend" said the other, and handed over the dice. Then the second gamester smeared over the dice with poison, and proposed to the former: "Come along, friend, let's play". "Good, friend" replied the other. Again, therefore, they played, and again that gamester swallowed each adverse die. The second gamester saw him doing so and said:

> The man knows not the swallowed die
> With sharpest burning is smeared o'er
> Bitter the hour at hand for you";

From this story it appears that the dice were made of some seeds. In the opinion of the late Prof. Luders the dice were made from seeds of a tree called *Vibhitaka* and when the game was played they were thrown on a board. Same fell upright and others on their sides. Those that fell upright, only counted. The *Dyutaparva* of the *Mahabharata* gives a graphic description of the fatal game of dice indulged in by the Pandavas to their ruin. Duryodhana, we are told grew jealous of the glory of the Pandavas and wanted to exterminate them. His uncle Shakuni suggested a game of dice saying that Yudhisthira was fond of gambling but did not know how to play. The game was arranged and with the help of Shakuni the Kauravas succeeded in divesting the Pandavas of all their earthly possessions.

Gambling seems to have been very much in vogue during the times of Kautilya for he advocates the appointment of a superintendent of gambling. This superintendent, he asys, "shall be honest and supply dice at the rate of a *Kakani* of hire per pair. Substitution by tricks of hand of dice other than thus supplied shall be punished with a fine of 12 *panas*. A false player shall not only be punished with the first amercement and fines leviable for theft and deceit, but also be made to forfeit the stakes he has won.

The superintendent shall take not only 5 per cent of the stakes won by every winner; and the hire payable for supplying dice and other accessories of dice play, but also the fee chargeable for supplying water and accommodation, besides the charge for license."

Imbibing liquors was another common practice on festive occasions. There were, it appears, three kinds of liquors. The first variety was made from molasses, the second from powdered rice and the third from *Madhura* flowers. Hiuen Tsiang says "with respect to the different kinds of wine and liquors, there are various sorts. The juice of the grape and sugarcane, these are used by the Kshatriyas *as drink; the Vaishyas* use strong fermented drink; the Shramanas and Brahmanas drink a sort of syrup made from the grape or sugarcane, but not of the nature of fermented wine." Kautilya strongly advocates government control of liquor and recommends the employment of "persons acquainted with the manufacture of liquor and ferments" as superintendents of liquor. He, according to Kautilya, "should carry on liquor traffic not only in forts and country parts, but also in camps. In *accordance with the requirements of demand and supply he may either centralize or decentralize the sale of liquor. Liquor shall* not be taken out of villages, nor shall liquor shops be close to each other. No fresh liquor, other than bad liquor, shall be sold below its price. Liquor shops shall contain many rooms provided with beds and seats kept apart. The drinking room shall contain scents, garlands of flowers, water, and other comfortable things suitable to the varying seasons'' are some of his injunctions.

Music and dancing were the most important means in the pursuit of pleasure. The lyre or lute was the most popular instrument and it appears to have been a rather lengthy bow-like instrument, and almost half of its downwards from the top (being probably of wood) was broad, while the lower half, being narrow had strings as is evidenced by the lyrist type of Samudragupta's coins. The sculptures of the Bhumara temple show three types of drums, one short and the other longer, both of which tied to the ends, were slung on the shoulders by means of strings or straps. These were cylindrical, while the third type was long, narrow in the centre, but broad towards the end. Cymbals, counches, timbrels and horns, tabor, flute, tamborine and low gourd lute were some of the other musical instruments.

The art of dancing had reached very highly developed technique during Kalidasa's time. In his *Malavikagnimitra* he speaks of a dancing tutor who conducted his practices in the music hall in the royal palace. The dancing tutor says, in the 1st act of the play, in praise of the art of dancing, "Thus sages regard this as an agreeable sacrificial feast to the eyes of the gods; it has been divided into two different ways by Shiva in his body which is blended with that of Uma, herein is seen the behaviour (life) of men arising from the three prime qualities and distinguished by various sentiments; *Natya* (scenic art or dancing) is festival they lashed the young folk with great wreathes of flowers, with tossing forehead marks and earrings they swayed like creepers of love's sandle tree. Like waves of passion's floods, they gleamed, all resonant with the cries of anklets adding music to their steps, while the rapid booming of the drums thrilled through their lithe frames, they cast off flower pollen like *Ketakis*."

The days of festivity in the life of the people, according to Vatsyayana, the author of the *Kamasutra* were five, namely (1) *Samaja* (festival to celebrate the worship of different deities) (2) *gosthis* (social gatherings of men and women), (3) *Apanakas* (drinking parties), and (4) *Udyanakas* (picnics or garden parties) and (5) *Samasya Krida* (social festivities attended by a large concourse of people). The more important, however, were the spring and the autumn festivals and occasions of coronation and national victories. The *Samaja* was held "at the temple of *Saraswati* the goddess of learning and the five arts on a day fixed every fortnight, that is on the *tithi* or lunar phase specially auspicious to the deity worshipped." The *gosthi* was the occasion for employing one's time in pleasant talk with persons of equal status, education and intelligence. These involved discussions and debates on diverse topics and resulted in a brilliant display of knowledge and the power of rhetoric. These meetings were also attended by the *ganikas* (courtezans) who were treated with respect and courtesy and in which they took an active part. The *Apanakas* were held to indugle in drinking different kinds of wines and liquors. To the garden parties went highly cultured citizens accompanied by *ganika* (curtezans) and whiled away their leisure in pleasant talk and conversation. The *Samasya Krida* was more of a social festival which was enlivened with music and dancing.

towards an empire. with the Guptas we lived in the Augstan age of ancient India. We tried to understand the meaning of the Ashokan pillars, the sculptured reliefs of Barhut and Sanchi, Mathura and Amravati, Karle and Ajanta, Badami and Ellora and Elephanta. We tried to understand the subtlety of Bhasa, the gigantic imagination of Kalidasa the metaphorical sweep of Bana and the emotional intensity of Bhartrihari. We inquired about the people's dress and houses, customs and manners, trade and luxury, in short, their joys and sorrows. Now, the time has come to ask, what does it all mean ? What is the significant content of this vast and persistent Indian stream of life which in its progress of centuries has thrown up and divoured back again mighty empires like those of the Mauryas and the Guptas. We must ask about the force that animates this life continuum that has built up the gigantic stupas, carved lofty cave temples and painted the most delicately beautiful frescoes that ever adorned the walls of any buildings in the world. We must try to discern the dynamic strength pulsating in the veins of this social group of the ancient Indians that withstood so many attempts on its personality and individuality. In short we must endeavour while looking back to descry the significance of the story of ancient India.

The first characteristic of the story of ancient India that strikes us most vividly is the presence of diverse racial strains in the social body of the nation. Indeed India can be justifiably described as the melting pot of some of the most important races of the world.

Racially man is divided into four major groups by anthropologists. These are Australoid, Negroid, Mongoloid and Caucasian. The *Australoid* "has a very wide nose, with a marked depression of the root, chocolate skin colour, dark hair that may be curly but never woolly, a long skull, and heavy bone ridges above the eyebrows." In this group are included certain groups in India and the Veddas of Ceylon. The *Negroid* has woolly or frizzy hair and no heavy brow ridges. His skin is dark, has a long skull and is wide nosed and thick lipped. The Andaman Islanders belong to this group. The *Mongoloid* have straight and coarse hair on the head but sparse facical and bodily hair and oblique eyes. The skin is yellow, face wide and skull round. The *Caucasian* skin is fair in colour which differentiates them more markedly from the others. Within this race group there is a large variability and consequently can be subdivided into Noradic, Alpine and Mediterranean to which some add a Dinaric.

In the racial history of India the Negritoes were the first comers "and real autochthons of the country". The Andaman Islanders and some members of the Kadars and Pulayans living in the interior of the hills of Cochin and Travancore as also the Irulas and primitive tribes of the Wynaad represent the Negrito racial stock in India. Besides these the Peninsular Indian aboriginal population contains another primitive element is "the most dominant element at present in the tribal population of Southern and Central India as well as among semi-hinduised tribes further north. The so-called "exterior castes" of Hindu society throughout the greater part of the country are also mainly constituted from this racial strain. We have no precise information as to when this race first came into India. It is found among the per-[illegible] skulls in the Tinevelly district, and from references in early Sanskrit literature to "*Nishadas*" where they are described as noseless (*anasah*) with dark skin-colour and peculiar speech and habits, there can be no doubt that the Proto-Australoid tribes were meant."

The Mongoloid group in India conists of three subdivisions "of which the *Palae-Mongoloids* are of a more primitive nature and do not exhibit the characters so conspicuously; they are characterised by medium stature with a skin colour varying from dark to light brown." The head of this group varies from a long to a medium shape with the occipital portions bulging outwards—a characteristic peculiar to long headed races. This Palae-Mongoloid strain is found in the sub-Himalayan region as the more ancient stratum of the population and forms a dominant element in the tribes living in Assam and the Indo-Burmese frontiers". The other Palae-Mongoloid group is short-broadheaded and darker in skin colour and rounder in face. The third group which shows Mongoloid characteristics in the most developed form is the Tibeto-Mongoloid element. This is found in Sikkim and Bhutan and must have infiltrated from Tibet in comparatively later times.

The most important racial group in the early population of India however was the Mediterranean group, which "must be distinguished from another closely akin to the European type, which entered this country later and whose remains have been found in large numbers in the Chaleolithic sites of the Indus valley and further east. It is probable that this was the race responsible for the development of the Indus civilization and subsequently dispersed by the "Aryan" speaking Vedic inv
the Gangetic basin and to a smaller extent bey
Vindhyas. It forms today a dominant ele

population of northern India and an important constituent of the upper section of the people of the rest of the country."

What were the cultural contributions of all these racial stocks which constitute the racial make up of India? On this point we have little material of a definite character. But there is some ground *for* thinking, says Dr. Guha, "that the cult of the *ficus* tree originated *from* the *Negritoes. To the Proto*—Australoid races may perhaps be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food—taboos and magical beliefs still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and inter-marriage which forms the basis of the caste system must also owe its origin to them. The use of silk, tea, rice, paper, terraced cultivation, communal houses, head-hunting and betal nut culture may be mentioned as the contributions of the Mongoloid race. To one of its branches, *namely the oceanic* we *also owe* the introduction of the outrigger canoe, the cocoanut *and the* pineapple. The *Palae*-Mediterraneans probably brought pottery, Megalithic culture, with its associated fertility rites and human sacrifice, and it seems likely that they were responsible for introducing matriarchal institutions and the high position of women in peninsular India. The Mediterranean race proper, as far as can be judged developed the civilization of the Indus valley, and to it we owe the largest content of the present day Indian religion and culture most of the common domestic animals, river *transport*, *garments*, the structure of the houses, the use of brick, painted pottery and the building of the towns are *due to them*. Astronomy and the Indian script are also their contributions. particular share *of* the Alpo-Dinaric races we cannot assess but if the contention of the late Ramprasad Chanda be right, then the development of the Bhakti cult and religious emotionalism of Gujarat and Bengal must be attributed to them."

"The Nordics brought horses, probably iron and the best variety of wheat, the use of milk, alcoholic drinks, dicing, chariot racing, and the tailored garments were due to them. They introduced patriarchy in Indian social life, but their chief gift was undoubtedly the "Aryan language"—the most delicate and flexible vehicle of thought. They gave the shape into which contributions of other races were fitted. Their chief contributions, however, were in the domain of thought rather than in material culture. Epic poetry, the concept of cosmic order, *Rita*, lofty ethical ideas and philosophic thoughts, and abstract natural sciences were their gifts in the building up of the Indian civilization, and it would be historically wrong and scientifically inaccurate to deny that they have been directly or indirectly responsible for most of the *glories of Indian literature, philosophy* and art."

Such, is the composite make-up of the acient Indian nation and its culture. During its long journey through development it was involved in diverse preliminary racial conflicts which were ultimately resolved into a harmonious synthesis. For this purpose it had to invent and adopt peculiar ideological patterns, artistic tendencies and social institutions which have become the subjects of unqualified condemnation or vigorous defence.

The phenomenon of *castes* in Hindu society is an instance in point. It has provoked a good deal of speculation among scholars, which in its wake has given birth to a number of divergent theories and explanations. The very word "caste" is of a comparatively modern origin, the usage being attributed to the Portuguese who intended to mean thereby a social arrangement *ensuring* the preservation of the purity of blood. The system in its appearance is so *bizarre and in its working* so complex that any comprehensive definition is very difficult. *Senart describes it* as a "corporate group, exclusive and, in theory at least rigorously hereditory. It possesses a certain traditional and independent organisation, a chief and a council, and as occasion demands it meets in assemblies endowed with more or less full authority." According to the late Dr. Ketkar the salient characteristics of a caste-group are two, viz. (a) its membership is exclusively hereditary and (b) marriage *is permitted only* within the caste group.

Regarding the origin of "caste" there is no unanimity among scholars and a number of divergent hypotheses are proposed to solve the problem. Prof. C. V. Vaidya suggests that the "Indo-Aryans" came into India with the incubus of caste upon them". Senart points out the similarities between the early social divisions in India and elsewhere and concludes that the salient features of the caste system were a part of a *stock* of usage and tradition common to all branches of the Aryan race. Risley emphasises the racial *divisions* as the origin of caste, Ibbetson sees tribes at the root of it and Nesfield occupation. In the opinion of *Dutt* "the most important factors in the development of caste were the racial struggle between the *fair skinned Aryans and the dark*-skinned non-Aryans; the division of labour leading to the formation of occupational classes, *and the tribal* differences especially among the non-Aryans which survived the spread of a common Aryan culture."

The division of society in the Vedic age were occupational as between Aryans and Aryans while hereditary as Aryans against non-Aryans. As time passed, occupations being mostly hereditary the "classes" assumed a hardened and rigid aspect, but the barriers separating them were, as yet, neither constant nor insurmountable. By the time the *laws of Manu* came on the scene, the reformist attack on the privilege of the Brahmanas was repulsed and as a result thereof "classes" were transformed into "castes". The caste-system, however we may denounce it to-day as having outlived its utility, it must be remembered—worked as a kind of a "defence-mechanism" for the preservation of rights, responsibilities and privileges of individuals, both within a social group and between groups and groups.

In the sphere of ideas the resultant Indian culture reveals a *via media* or better still, a synthesis between two conflicting ideological tendencies. These two trends are (1) *Pravritti* (or activism) and (2) *Nivritti* (passivism or renunciation). In the Rigvedic times we do not come across as much as a suspicion of the ideal of renunciation in life, which plays such an important part in later Indian thought and consequently in life. The Rig vedic Aryans lived a life of struggle and progress, full of fights and victories and territorial acquisition and establishment of kingdoms. Under such conditions no thought will be further from a man's mind than that of renunciation. Hence it is more than probable that renunciation and its associate ideal of asceticism originated in non-Aryan circles. At the confluence of two distinct thoughts and thought processes it was inevitable that they would influence each other's patterns. Thus, we find that renunciation was absorbed into Aryan thought. But this absorption *necessarily produced* a conflict with its predecessor in the form of *Pravritti* (activism). This conflict, *it* was devolved upon the *Gita* to resolve and synthesize. The tendency of Indian culture, hence, is neither wholly towards burly activism nor world retiring renunciation. To describe it solely as "to the devil with things material" as has been repeated *ad nauseum* by Westerners, betrays not a technical inexactitude *only* but fundamentally an error of comprehension.

What then are the salient characteristics of Indian culture? Indian culture, *to our mind, is overwhelmingly* synthetic in nature, dynamic in tendency and diffusive in movement. Such a *description* violently outrages all our preconceived and borrowed ideas like the conservatism *of India*, "India in splendid isolation" and so on and so forth. India, it is generally held in knowledgeable circles, to borrow a journalistic claptrap, is conservative. If she is conservative she hardly changes etc. etc. then she cannot synthesize. But to synthesize, it can be pointed out, means to amalgamate the old and the new. The story of ancient India is an account of adjustments in her life ethnic and ideological; *in this process* of adjustment not all that was old was discarded nor all that was new was accepted. *The tendency* was to see how far the old and the new could be effectively harmonized *towards general* progress.

Now let us examine the "diffusive" *movement of* Indian culture. The virility and exuberance of Indian cultural tendencies were such that they could hardly be contained within the geographical boundaries of India. In the *wake of extensive* commercial activity Indian cultural influences penetrated all over the surrounding regions. The story of this cultural immigration is both interesitng and instructive.

China: The cultural contacts between India and China were firmly based on a common interest in the philosophy of Gautama, the Buddha. The earliest contact of a historical nature was in 1st century A.D. when emperor Ming-Ti sent an embassy consisting of 12 people led by an important officer to India to procure an image of the Buddha. The first Indian pundit to go to China however, was Kashyapa Matanga, a native of central India who is credited with Chinese translation of some Hinayanist texts. Kashyapa was followed by several others and these visits were eventually reciprocated by the famous Chinese trio—Fa Hien, Hiuen Tsiang and I Tsing Fa Hien started his travels, which eventually took him to India, in 399 A. D. and returned to China fifteen years later. The book in which he has left his impression of the places he visited has once been translated into French and four times into English. It contains a very interesting and valuable description of the government and social conditions of the period. Fa Hien was followed by Hiuen Tsiang whose travels extended from 629 A. D. to 645 A. D. His narrative is a veritable treasure house of accurate information which has enabled us to know a great deal about the times of Harsha and Pulakeshin II. It Tsing who followed Hiuen Tsiang in the last quarter of the 7th century A. D. has also laid the student of Indian history under a heavy debt of gratitude by his minute and valuable information which he has left for posterity. These exchanges of learned pundits between India and China continued almost right upto the downfall of ancient India and when this "cultural heritage of India was brought into contact with the Chiness spirit, a new China arose—a China which persiste to this day."

in the country and built temples of Vishnu. How strong the Indian influence was could easily be seen from the otherwhelming Indian character of the ancient kingdom of Ayuthia (Ayodhya). Even today through her national faith which is Buddhism, Siam shows her cultural affinity towards India in her art, society and language.

In Cambodia: the influence of Hinduism had begun to be felt very strongly as early as the 6th cent. A. D.. The kings who ruled the land were Hindus and from their court proceeded Hindu traditions which permeated the entire life of Cambodia. At about the same time Hindu culture had started exerting its influence in Java and Bali. Though Java is Moslemised to day, the tiny and romantic island of Bali is entirely Hindu in life and outlook.

But the most important index of the effect of the Indian cultural influences is shown by the art of Greater India. The Stupa of Borobuder described by Dr. Vogel as "the greatest and most renowned monument not only in Java but of the whole Buddhist world, is undoubtedly a remote descendant of those early Stupas of Central India—the "topes" of Barhut and Samchi." It is architecturally unique, rich in sculptural decoration and even surpasses anything found in India proper. "It is not only due to the wonderful vastness and excellence of those hundreds of panels which adorn the walls and balustrades of the four long pessages, through which the faithful rising from terrace to terrace, performed the solemn preambulation of the sacred monuments. It is above all, the spirit of supreme repose, of serene ness pervading them in which the Buddhist ideal finds so eloquent an expression." Anoth ful example of the art of Greater India is the Angkor Vat in Cambodia. It is modelled on Dravidian architectural ideas and the galleries are adorned with beautiful representations from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

Indian cultural influences were not restricted to South-east Asia only. Central Asia, and the countries bordering on it received and absorbed many an Indian cultural tradition. The parallelism found between many *Jataka* stories and fables from Aesop like the *Ass in the Lion's skin, The Wolf and the Lamb and the Fox and the Crow* unmistakably suggest Indian influences. Many stories found in the *Jakata* collection, as well as *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha* travelled with Indian traders to an ds of the Middle East and found there a receptive ear. A notable instance in point is the famous story of *Karataka* and *Damanaka from the Panchatantra which was* translated into Pahlavi and its closest representatives exist today in the form of Kalilah and Dimnah in Arabic and Syrian and the *Fables of Bidpai* in English. From this brief sketch of the migration of Indian cultural influences both towards the west and the east, the diffusive nature of Indian culture could best be understood and its importance assessed.

Such then, is the burden of the story of Ancient India, a story of engrossing and instructive interest on its own merits and of special significance for a proper understanding of our nation.

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2	Skillful	Skilful
4	Protoshistoric	protohistoric
6	Mohedjo Daro	Mohenjo Daro
9	Constrruction	Construction
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